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ABSTRACT

This unit is part of a series of curriculum materials that applies the choices approach to critical junctures in history. The focus is on Germany's defeat in World War I and conditions in Germany contributing to the rise of Nazism. Students are provided with background readings on the Weimar Republic, the reparations imposed on Germany with their defeat, and the culture, values, and politics of post-World War I Germany. Children's literature is also presented as another view of the cultural values. The July 1932 Reichstag elections are explained with an analysis of the platforms of each of the contending parties: (1) the KDP (Communist Party of Germany); (2) SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany); (3) Center (originally called the Christian People's Party); and (4) NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party). Students examine each party's platform and discuss policy issues relating to conditions in Germany at the time. (EH)

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CHOICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Crisis, Conscience, And Choices: Weimar Germany And The Rise Of Hitler

SO 028 707

ALTERNATIVES FOR PUBLIC DEBATE AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

A program of the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies

Brown University, Box 1948, Providence, RI 02912

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Jeffrey Anderson, *Professor of Political Science*
Brown University

Volker Berghahn, *Professor of History*
Brown University

Frederick F. Fullerton, *Assistant Editor*
Watson Institute

Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Professor of Sociology*
Brown University

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Crisis, Conscience, and Choices: Weimar Germany and the Rise of Hitler is the third unit in a series that applies the choices approach to critical junctures in history. The Choices Education Project also publishes an ongoing series on current foreign policy issues. All units in the *Choices for the 21st Century* series are updated regularly.

CHOICES

for the 21st Century Education Project

November 1994

Director
Susan Graseck

Curriculum Developer
Mark Malkasian

Director of School Programs
Patricia Keenan-Byrne

Fellow in Residence
Timothy Bickford

Project Assistant
Jennifer Eadie

Staff Associate
Anne Campau Prout

Unit Author
Don Bakker

The Choices for the 21st Century Education Project develops curricula for high schools and colleges on current foreign policy issues and offers workshops, institutes, and in-service programs for high school teachers. Course materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

The Choices for the 21st Century Education Project is a program of the **Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies** at Brown University.

Thomas J. Biersteker
Director

Contents

Part I: Germany's Defeat in World War I	1
Part II: The Troubled Infancy of the Weimar Republic	6
Part III: Culture, Values, and Politics	11
Optional Reading: Children's Literature in Weimar Germany	19
The July 1932 Reichstag Elections	23
Party Platforms	26-33
Platform 1: Communist Party of Germany	26
Platform 2: Social Democratic Party of Germany	28
Platform 3: Center Party	30
Platform 4: National Socialist German Workers' Party	32
The NSDAP and Totalitarian Rule	34
Optional Reading: Conscience and the Patriot	37
Chronology of German History — 1914-1939	40
Biographical Sketches	42
Suggested Reading	46

The Choices for the 21st Century Education Project is a program of the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies at Brown University. Choices was established to help citizens think constructively about foreign policy issues, to improve participatory citizenship skills, and to encourage public judgment on policy priorities.

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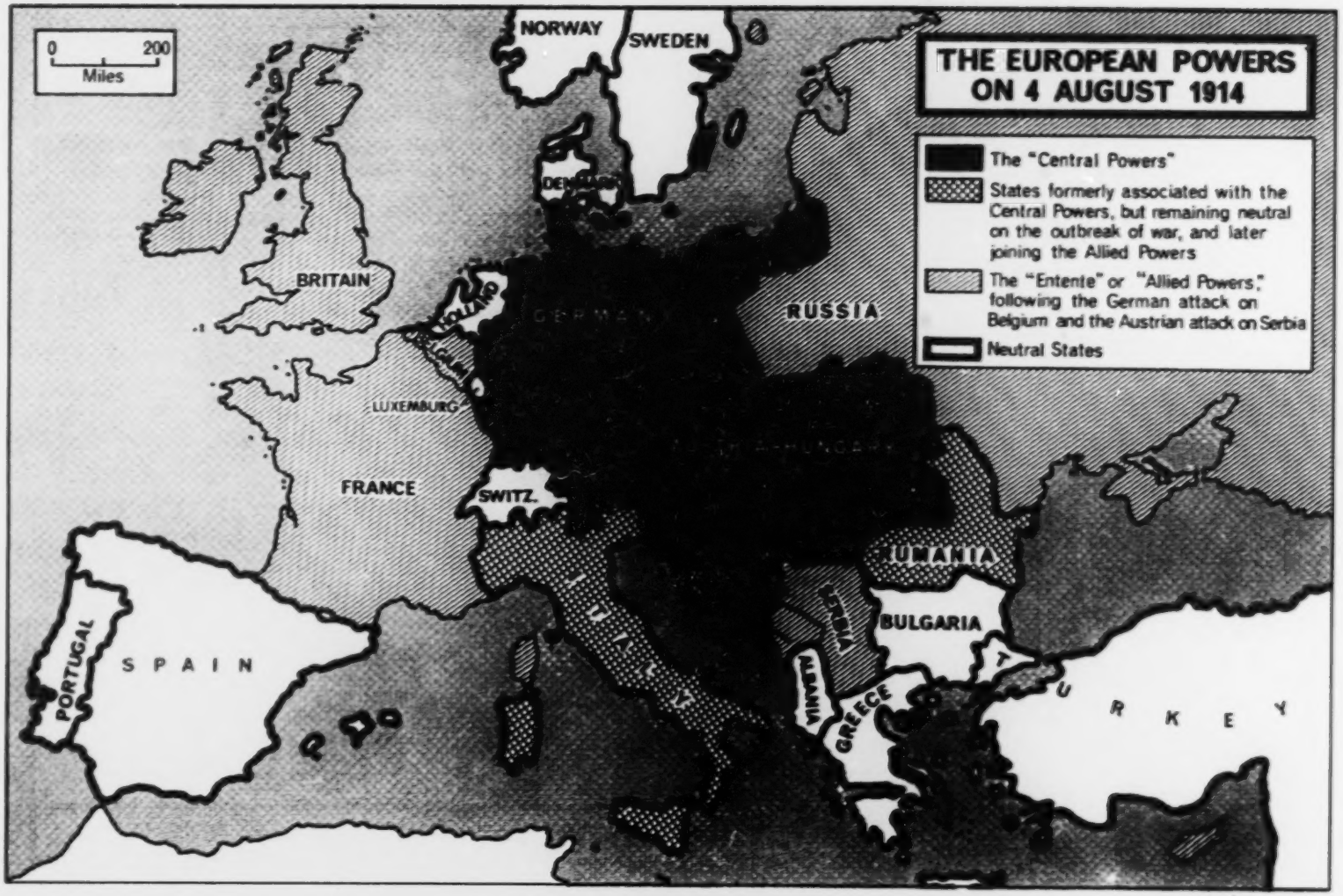

From *First World War Atlas*

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Part I: Germany's Defeat in World War I

Germany at the Turn of the Century

During the first decade of the 20th century, Germany was the fastest growing industrialized nation in Europe. German steel production — then viewed as the best single indicator of industrialization — had just exceeded that of Britain, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. By 1913, Germany produced nearly three times more steel than did Britain. Rapid development in the chemical and electrical industries put Germany in the forefront of what was called the "Second Industrial Revolution." In addition, the German population, which increased from 40 million in 1871 to more than 65 million in 1911, was growing faster than that of the other major European powers. Many of the new industrial cities more than doubled in size during this period, as millions of German peasants left the countryside. By 1911, more than 40 percent of the total German labor force worked in industry.

By the standards of the time, German society was well-educated and homogeneous. Compulsory education for children from the ages of six to fourteen provided all Germans with basic reading, writing, and math skills. The illiteracy rate in Germany was lower than that of France or Britain. Ninety-nine percent of Germans were Christians — with 62 percent identifying themselves as Protestants and 37 percent as Roman Catholics.

Germany's 600,000 Jews represented about 1 percent of the population. However, the prominence of Jews in business, universities, and government made them a visible minority and a common target of resentment. Hatred toward Jews, known as anti-Semitism, was an established feature of German politics.

German culture was especially rich, and the German people were justly proud of their collective heritage. Musicians such as Bach and Beethoven, writers such as Goethe and Schiller, and philosophers such as Kant and Hegel had made their mark not only on German culture, but also on European culture.

Germany's political system

The accomplishments of the German people were especially remarkable in light of the fact that Germany did not exist as a country until 1871. Unlike Britain, France, and Russia — countries that were unified politically at the end of the Middle Ages — the German lands entered the modern age divided up among dozens of local rulers. In the 1860s, Otto von Bismarck, the prime minister of the most powerful German state, Prussia, embarked on a campaign to create a united Germany. To achieve his goals, Bismarck

Note to Students

The knife of the pathologist swiftly slices through the skin and muscle to expose the organs beneath. Carefully, the pathologist removes each organ, looking for signs of the disease that caused the death of the patient. The scene of a doctor performing a post mortum or autopsy is familiar to all of us in an age of modern medicine. Why does the doctor perform an autopsy? Obviously, it is too late to help the patient. However, by examining the victims of disease, doctors may acquire information that will help them treat living patients suffering from similar diseases.

Historians, like pathologists, seek to understand the present by examining the past. In this unit, you will be taken back to Germany in the years after World War I, when the leaders of what came to be called the Weimar Republic tried to establish a new, democratic state. With your classmates and teacher, you will reconstruct the issues that confronted this struggling democracy. You will explore, using examples of artwork, campaign posters, and other materials from the time, the increasingly serious symptoms that led to the death of the Weimar system and gave rise to Adolf Hitler and Nazi dictatorship. By understanding how democracy died in Weimar Germany, you will be better able to understand the risks and challenges facing democratic governments today, both in our own country and throughout the world.

led Prussia to victory in wars against Denmark, the Austrian empire, and France.

After German unification, Bismarck worked to strengthen the power of the state and to increase Germany's influence abroad. Stability and order were highly valued in Bismarck's Germany, especially as revolutionary political movements gained a foothold in many European countries. Bismarck took a two-pronged approach to countering the revolutionaries. On the one hand, the army and the police were given broad powers to control civil unrest, while the government restricted the rights of labor unions. On the other hand, Bismarck adopted reforms to improve conditions for workers that put many ordinary Germans ahead of their counterparts in Britain and France.

As in much of Europe, Germany had a rigid class structure. No matter how successful, few Germans could rise above the social class into which they were born. The German higher education system, which was very selective, expensive, and rigorous, reinforced these divisions. Moreover, the officer corps of the German military and top positions in government were reserved for members of the upper class.

Germany's rapid industrialization created strains in German society. As the number of industrial workers grew, so did the strength of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), the leading working-class party. Germany's parliament, the Reichstag, was increasingly torn by tension between the upper class, which had traditionally held political and economic power, and the working class.

By the time Bismarck left office in 1890, he had molded a state that was efficient but resistant to change. While all adult men had the right to vote in national elections, real political power remained in the hands of the kaiser (a word that comes from the Roman title of caesar) and his ministers. Voting restrictions at the regional level ensured that the German nobility and wealthy industrialists held the largest share of influence. These groups opposed major changes in the political system and remained loyal to the kaiser.

Germany was in many respects undemocratic, but the government did not attempt to completely stamp out dissent. A considerable degree of intellectual and artistic freedom was permitted. Germany at the turn of the century was the scene of intense political, social, and cultural debate. Many of Europe's most radical movements in politics and art had their origins in Germany.

The Road to Sarajevo

As the 20th century began, Germany had one implacable enemy — France. German unification took place only after the Prussian army inflicted a humiliating defeat on the French in 1870. As a result of the war, France was forced to turn over the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany and to pay Germany 5 billion francs.

Germany's growing strength and ambition raised concerns among the leaders of Britain and Russia as well. In 1907, they joined the French in forming the Triple Entente to counter German power. Germany had provoked Britain by embarking on a large-scale program to build up its navy. While German leaders argued that a large fleet was necessary to protect their country's worldwide commercial interests and overseas colonies, the British saw the German build-up as a threat to their long-standing dominance at sea.

> *A German maritime supremacy must be acknowledged to be incompatible with the existence of the British Empire, and even if that Empire disappeared, the union of the greatest military [Germany] with the greatest naval power in one state would compel the world to combine for the riddance of such an incubus [evil spirit].*
>
> *—Senior official of the British Foreign Office*

The British also worried that Germany would challenge their country's position as the world's leading exporter. They resented German efforts to establish diplomatic and commercial footholds in Africa, the Middle East, and other areas of British influence. Meanwhile, Russian officials feared that the growth of German military power was part of a plan to grab territory from the Russian empire. They also felt that the high tariffs Germany imposed on Russian grain imports were unfair.

Faced with three hostile powers, German leaders increasingly believed that they were surrounded. In response, they strengthened their alliance with the Austro-Hungarian empire. Ironically, this alliance brought Germany into the two-front war that many German leaders had sought to avoid.

On June 28, 1914, Serb nationalists assassinated the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, in Sarajevo. The assassination set off a series of events that ultimately led to World War I. With the support of their German allies, the Austrian government issued an ultimatum demanding that Serbia cooperate with Austria to end anti-Austrian political activity. The Austrian ultimatum prompted a strong response from Russia, which viewed itself as the protector of Serbia and other Slavic nations. When Austria declared war against Serbia in late July 1914, Russian leaders ordered their army to begin preparing for war. German leaders were suddenly called upon to make a fateful decision.

German military strategy called for Germany to attack swiftly and decisively, as had been the case in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, to avoid being squeezed between France and Russia. According to the Schlieffen plan, German troops would deliver a quick knockout blow against France by racing through Belgium, Luxemburg, and the Netherlands to outflank the French army and capture Paris. Germany would then be able to concentrate its energies on the slow-footed Russian army.

For the Schlieffen plan to succeed, the Germans could not allow the Russian army to get a head start in preparing for war. Consequently, the German government ordered its military to mobilize and declared war against Russia on August 1. Two days later, Germany declared war on France, Russia's ally. German action prompted the British to declare war on Germany on August 4. World War I had begun.

Many Germans were initially enthusiastic about the war. Thousands rushed to enlist. Even the leadership of the SPD in the Reichstag supported the war effort by voting to provide the military with additional funds. German workers, long suspected of disloyalty by top government officials, patriotically rallied around the kaiser.

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Stalemate at the Battlefront

In the first month of the war, Germany launched a massive offensive against France that almost captured Paris. In September, however, French and British forces halted the advance of the German army. By the end of 1914, the battle lines on the western front were clearly drawn. Both sides adopted trench warfare, settling into highly fortified positions that were difficult to attack. The development of the machine gun and heavy artillery gave defense the advantage over offense. During the next four years, millions of soldiers died in France in battles that scarcely changed the borders of the front lines.

On the eastern front, German forces were more successful. In late August 1914, the Germans repulsed a Russian offensive that had crossed their frontiers. In the following months, they took the offensive and advanced deep into the territory of the Russian empire. By March 1917, military setbacks and increasing misery at home forced Russia's ruler, Tsar Nicholas II, to step down. Eight months later, a communist government under the leadership of V.I. Lenin seized power and began making plans to pull Russia out of the war.

On the oceans, Britain used its naval superiority to impose a naval blockade around Germany. Germany was cut off from its colonies, as well as from supplies of overseas food and raw materials. The effects of the blockade were worsened by poor harvests in 1916 and 1917, plus an unusually cold winter in 1916-17. Millions of Germans, especially those in the cities who could not afford the black-market prices for food and fuel, were pushed to the brink of starvation. More than 700,000 German civilians died during the war as a result of the blockade. Meanwhile, German submarines, or U-boats, tried to enforce a blockade against Britain and France.

Unlike European conflicts in the 19th century, World War I evolved into a "total war" in which the struggle was not limited to the battlefield. Each side tried to cripple the other's economy and undermine morale on the home front. Even neutral countries, such as the United States, found that their ability to trade freely with Europe was in danger. From the early months of the war, the British naval blockade

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had all but wiped out American foreign trade with Germany and its allies. However, German submarine attacks on U.S. ships left a deeper impression on American public opinion.

When World War I broke out, President Woodrow Wilson and the great majority of Americans saw no reason for their country to become involved. For them, the war embodied the worse features of European politics. By 1917, however, prospects of a German victory were a growing source of concern for U.S. officials. In a final attempt to end the fighting, President Wilson called upon the warring nations in January 1917 to accept a "peace without victory."

Within a week of Wilson's appeal for peace, the German government announced the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. This meant that any merchant ship in the war zone, even one from a neutral country, could be sunk without warning. German leaders felt their decision was justified by the fact that ships flying the American flag were often used to transport military supplies to the Allies. After three American merchants ships were sunk in March 1917, the United States declared war against Germany on April 2, 1917. Although large numbers of American troops would not reach the western front until 1918, the entry of the United States into the war raised hopes among Britain, France, and the other Allies.

Germany's Struggle for Victory

In Germany, significant opposition to the war appeared in 1917. In April, walkouts by thousands of German workers — more than 200,000 in Berlin alone — illustrated the growing discontent. That same month, radical members of the SPD split off to form two new political parties. One of the groups was known as the Spartacus League, in honor of the

President Wilson's Fourteen Points
January 8, 1918

1. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at....Diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view...
2. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside of territorial waters, alike in peace and in war...
3. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations...
4. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest points consistent with domestic safety...
5. A free, open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims...
6. The evacuation of all Russian territory [a reference to those areas occupied by German troops]...
7. Belgium...must be evacuated and restored...
8. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine... should be righted...
9. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality...
10. The people of Austria-Hungary...should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development...
11. [the establishment of new states and the settlement of national boundaries in the Balkans]...
12. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life... and autonomous development; and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations...
13. An independent Polish state should be erected...which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea...
14. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small alike.

Thracian slave who led a revolt against Rome in the 1st century B.C. In the Reichstag, the SPD had become the largest party, although its members had not been given any role in the government. In July 1917, the SPD and other leftist parties joined forces to pass a resolution in the Reichstag that called for peace without annexations.

Protests against the war hardened the resolve of top German officials to press on to a military victory. Control of the German government passed into the hands of Germany's two leading generals, Paul von Hindenburg and Erich von Ludendorff. They approved stronger measures to combat the antiwar movement. For example, the leader of the SPD in the Reichstag, Friedrich Ebert, was charged with treason for supporting a strike of munitions workers. In addition, the newly formed Fatherland Party launched a campaign to promote German patriotism and support for the war.

A turning point

The early months of 1918 suggested that the war was approaching a decisive juncture. In the United States, President Wilson unveiled a fourteen-point peace plan (see opposite page) in January 1918 that raised hopes for an end to the conflict. Wilson sought to turn despair over the war into support for his vision to reshape international relations. Central to Wilson's plan were the principles of self-determination, open diplomacy, freedom of the seas, free trade, and arms control.

Advocates of peace in Germany took heart from the fact that Wilson's Fourteen Points did not blame their country for the war. Likewise, the plan did not impose specific penalties on Germany.

Meanwhile, Germany's generals saw an opportunity to achieve final military victory as a result of developments in Russia. Lenin and his fellow communists had come to power promising land, peace, and bread. They were eager to end the war against Germany so they could focus their energies against their opponents in Russia. On March 3, 1918, Lenin's government signed a separate peace treaty with Germany at the town of Brest-Litovsk. Under the agreement, Russia gave up huge tracts of land along its western border, as well as 40 percent of its industry.

The Brest-Litovsk Treaty enabled Germany to shift hundreds of thousands of troops to the western front for a decisive offensive. German leaders wanted to strike quickly, fearing that the arrival of fresh troops from the United States would eventually turn the tide of the war. On March 21, 1918, German soldiers were rallied to launch a final assault against the Allies. Once again, the German people were assured that victory was near.

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Part II: The Troubled Infancy of the Weimar Republic

Weimar's Tarnished Reputation

Germany emerged from World War I a battered and, in many respects, a bewildered country. In the final months of 1918, Germans had witnessed the reversal of their army's spring offensive, the abdication of the kaiser, the proclamation of a democratic republic, and the signing of a hastily arranged armistice. All of this took place while German troops continued to occupy vast stretches of Russia and to hold down well-defended positions against the Allies in France.

It was understandable then that many Germans could not accept that they were the losers of World War I. And yet that was precisely the basis of the Versailles Treaty presented to the leaders of the Weimar Republic in May 1919. German officials, as well as the German people as a whole, were stunned by the harshness of the treaty's terms. They viewed the Versailles Treaty as unfair and humiliating. The treaty made it plain that Germany was a defeated nation. For millions of Germans, the Weimar Republic itself was identified with their country's shame and weakness.

Shaky foundations

The political foundations of the Weimar Republic were shaky from the start. Three political parties — the SPD, the Catholic Center (plus its allies in the Catholic Bavarian People's Party), and the smaller German Democratic Party (DDP) — had spearheaded the creation of the Weimar Republic. In early 1919, these three parties combined to win 76 percent of the vote in the first parliamentary elections. When the next elections were held one year later, their share of the vote shrank to less than 50 percent. Never again would the founding political coalition of the Weimar Republic receive more than 50 percent of the votes cast.

Meanwhile, parties on the far left and the far right of the German political spectrum together captured more than 35 percent of the vote in 1920. These forces rejected the basic legitimacy of the Weimar system. On the far left, the newly formed German Communist Party (KPD) polled 20 percent. KPD supporters were especially bitter that SPD leaders had called in the army to put down the Spartacist workers' uprising in Berlin in January 1919. On the far right, 15 percent of the vote in 1920 went to the nationalist German National Peoples' Party (DNVP). Most of the DNVP's members favored a return to the social order of prewar Germany and wanted the monarchy to be restored in some form. Throughout the Weimar period, at least one-third of the German electorate consistently voted for parties that opposed the new republican system.

The Weimar Republic also faced attack from the wartime leaders of the German military. Beginning in late 1919, many of Germany's generals, most notably Field Marshal Erich von Ludendorff, argued that the civilian government that had taken power in the final days of the war had betrayed the armed forces. Former Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg's silence gave credence to the accusations. The notion that Germany had suffered a *Dolchstoss* ("stab in the back") appealed to many Germans who could not bring themselves to believe that their country's mighty army was on the verge of collapse in November 1918. (In fact, as Germany's top two military commanders, both Ludendorff and Hindenburg had pressed for a quick end to the war because of the sinking morale among German troops.)

The Politics of Anger

German anger was further inflamed in January 1920, when the Allied Reparations Committee, established by the Versailles Treaty, issued its report. In effect, the committee demanded that Germany pay nearly all the damages of the war in Western Europe, including the costs of pensions to the families of Allied soldiers who were killed or maimed.

Initially, the total bill came to 269 billion German marks (equivalent to nearly $70 billion at a time when the U.S. government's annual budget was slightly over $5 billion). When the German government protested that the amount was excessive and far beyond the capacity of Germany to pay, the British and French threatened military action. After tense negotiations, the German government reluctantly agreed to pay 132

billion marks (about $33 billion) in reparations. For many Germans, the reparations agreement meant that their government had accepted the article of the Versailles Treaty that held Germany and its allies fully responsible for the war.

The treaty also severely limited the size of the German army. As a result, thousands of young officers were left unemployed. Many of them joined the ranks of the *Freikorps* (Free Corps), which were organized to combat the political forces of the far left in Germany. In March 1920, *Freikorps* brigades marched on Berlin and forced the Weimar government to flee. Even as they formed a new government, the *Freikorps* troops met no opposition from the German army. The army's chief of staff remarked, "the *Reichswehr* [German army] does not fire upon the *Reichswehr*!" The coup d'etat, however, collapsed within a week, largely as the result of a general strike organized by the SPD.

The *Freikorps* uprising dramatized the place of political violence in the Weimar Republic. Ultra-nationalist political groups carried out hundreds of terrorist attacks against their opponents in the early 1920s. Few of the right-wing terrorists were prosecuted, and those convicted were generally treated leniently by conservative German judges. In contrast, left-wing terrorists received harsh sentences.

Among the most notorious acts of terrorism by ultra-nationalists was the assassination of German Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau in June 1922. Ultra-nationalists hated Rathenau for his role in reaching a settlement with the Allies and because he was a Jew. Anti-Semitism gained new strength during the Weimar era. Extremists blamed Jews for Germany's defeat in World War I and claimed that they had masterminded the communist revolution in Russia.

Adolf Hitler's political roots

At the time of its formation in 1920, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) was one of many small groups fanning the flames of extreme nationalism in the Weimar Republic. More important, the NSDAP (whose members were known as Nazis) served as the launching pad for the political career of its charismatic leader, Adolf Hitler.

Hitler had been born in Austria and did not become a German citizen until 1932. Nonetheless, he fought in the German army during World War I. Like other ultra-nationalists, he viewed the Versailles Treaty as humiliating and blamed the Weimar government for Germany's position.

The NSDAP received national attention in November 1923, when Hitler and Ludendorff tried to instigate a rebellion against the Weimar system in Munich, the capital of the southern German state of Bavaria. Hitler confronted conservative Bavarian officials in a local beer hall and demanded that they support a plan to march on Berlin and seize power. The officials backed out of the *putsch*, but the ultra-nationalists took their cause to the streets of Munich, where they met resistance from Bavarian police. Hitler was arrested and convicted of sedition. He was sentenced to serve five years in prison. During his imprisonment, Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*), a book that presented Hitler's political theories and

From Hitler's Mein Kampf

On racial purity:

"The stronger must dominate the weaker and not blend with the weaker, thus sacrificing his own greatness....All great cultures of the past perished only because the originally creative race died out from blood poisoning...

On the Jews:

"With every means he [the Jew] tries to subjugate....Culturally he contaminates art, literature, the theater, makes a mockery of natural feeling, overthrows all concepts of beauty and sublimity, of the noble and the good, and instead drags men down..."

On Germany's defeat:

"The defeats on the battlefield in August 1918 would have been child's play to bear. They stood in no proportions to the victories of our people. It was not [the defeats] which caused our downfall; no, it was brought about by that power [Jews and Marxists] which prepared these defeats by systematically over many decades robbing our people of the political and moral instincts and forces..."

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framed the program of the NSDAP. Hitler was released after serving less than a year of his sentence.

Racism, particularly anti-Semitism, was at the heart of Hitler's philosophy. Hitler believed that the Germans were the "master race," entitled to rule the world. In his mind, Jews were poisoning the blood and culture of the German people.

After leaving prison, Hitler and his party remained on the fringes of German political life in the 1920s. In early 1924, shortly after the failed *putsch* in Munich, the NSDAP won 6.6 percent of the vote in elections to the Reichstag. In the elections of 1928, the NSDAP's share of the vote had fallen to 2.6 percent.

Reparations and Hyperinflation

Despite the German government's pledge to pay reparations to the Allies, difficult economic conditions prevented Germany from keeping up with the schedule of payments. Meanwhile, French officials became alarmed at the resurgence of nationalism in Germany and the growing opposition to reparations. When Germany was late in delivering a shipment of telephone poles, French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr, Germany's industrial heartland, in January 1923, seizing control of German mines, railroads, and factories.

Without the military strength to oppose the occupation, the German government urged its citizens to fight back with non-violent means. German workers in the Ruhr went on strike and refused to cooperate with the French and Belgians. The German government, whose financial resources were already stretched to the limit, printed more money to support the strikers. After a nine-month stalemate, the German government abandoned its policy of passive resistance and began negotiations with the Allies. Reparations payments were eventually resumed, prompting the withdrawal of French and Belgian troops from the Ruhr in August 1925.

The occupation of the Ruhr sparked an economic crisis in Germany. By printing money to support striking workers, the German government fed the inflationary pressures that had been building since the war. By late 1923, the German mark — historically valued at four to the U.S. dollar — had become worth less than the paper it was printed on. Although the source of German hyperinflation could be traced largely to German financial policies during World War I and the government's response to the Ruhr occupation, many Germans blamed their economic woes on the international banking system and the Allied reparations demands. Public confidence in the Weimar system was again weakened.

Hyperinflation produced winners and losers in Germany. Millions of middle-class Germans, especially those in retirement, saw their life savings wiped out overnight. At the same time, hyperinflation allowed Germans who had borrowed money to pay off their debts with currency that was worth only a tiny fraction of what they had originally borrowed. In addition, the huge amount of money in circulation prodded industrial expansion.

In November 1923, the government took steps to

France's pledge: I am here — I stay here.

From *Punch*, February 7, 1923.

halt hyperinflation. A new mark, valued at 1 trillion old marks, was introduced, and strict financial policies was adopted. Hyperinflation was stopped, but the episode deepened the sense of insecurity and anxiety in Weimar Germany.

Weimar Identity

Even as Germany was shaken by political and economic crises in the 1920s, exciting breakthroughs in painting, architecture, music, graphic arts, film, and literature were taking place. Some of these developments were rooted in German culture. Others, like jazz, were adapted from the cultural explosion occurring at the same time in the United States. The "Weimar Culture," as it became known, was considered to be on the cutting edge of Western civilization. Berlin replaced Paris as the unofficial center of European culture.

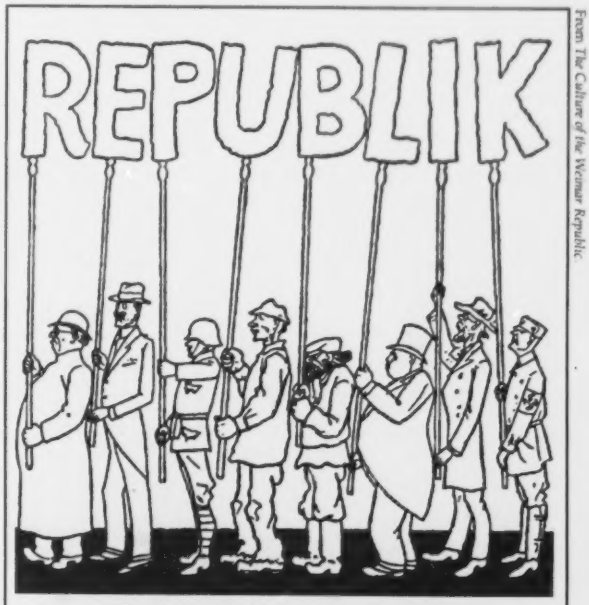
Not all Germans welcomed "Weimar Culture." Many conservatives, for example, believed that new freedoms for women were a challenge to their traditional, family-centered values. Similarly, the new realism in literature offended those who favored writers that glorified the German past. The anti-war novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by German writer Erich Maria Remarque, stirred widespread controversy in Germany. *All Quiet on the Western Front* depicted the horrors of trench warfare in World War I. German soldiers were portrayed not as heroes, but as war-weary young man who wanted to go home. When the movie version of the novel premiered in Berlin in December 1930, conservative forces led by the NSDAP staged massive protests and disrupted screenings. The government was eventually forced to ban the film.

Political divisions

Cultural issues spilled over into the German political arena in the 1920s and strained relations between the key founding partners of the Weimar Republic, the SPD and the Center Party.

Both parties had developed strong identities in the 19th century, largely due to the policies of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. In the 1870s, Bismarck had attempted to limit the influence of the Catholic Church in Germany. His measures, however, led many Catholics to deepen their allegiance to the church. The Center Party emerged as a defender of Catholic interests and enjoyed a loyal following. Likewise, Bismarck's suspicion of the labor movement strengthened the commitment of many workers to the SPD.

The clearly defined positions of the SPD and the Center made political compromise difficult in the Weimar Republic. Increasingly, the two leading moderate parties found themselves divided by specific issues and the values underlying them. During the hyperinflation of 1923, SPD cabinet officials left the coalition government dominated by the Center Party. The SPD remained the largest party in the Reichstag, but SPD representatives would not again serve as cabinet officials until June 1928. Meanwhile, Center officials sought new coalition partners to keep the SPD out of the government. They often turned to small, right-wing parties, many of which had originally called for the destruction of the Weimar system.



From *The Culture of the Weimar Republic*

The Republic, *by Thomas Heine*

The conservative trend in German politics was clearly revealed in the presidential elections of April 1925 that were called after President Friedrich Ebert, the SPD leader, died in office. Former Field Marshal Hindenburg, whom many suspected of wishing to restore the monarchy, narrowly defeated the Center's

candidate, Wilhelm Marx. The KPD refused to support the moderate Marx against Hindenburg. Instead, the communists ran their own candidate, Ernst Thaelmann, who polled 6 percent of the vote.

The 1925 elections raised fears that Hindenburg would use the powers of the presidency under the Weimar Constitution to undermine parliamentary democracy. Three years earlier, Benito Mussolini and his Fascist Party had crushed a struggling democracy in Italy, drawing admiration from ultra-nationalists in Germany. Nonetheless, the first four years of Hindenburg's rule marked the high point of the Weimar Republic. Internationally, Germany entered the League of Nations in 1926 and peacefully resolved several of its disputes with the Allies. Economically, stable economic policies paved the way for growing prosperity.

Depression Sparks New Crisis

The crash of the American stock market in October 1929 was felt around the world. Germans discovered that their economy was especially vulnerable. Much of the prosperity in Germany from 1925 to 1929 had been fueled by loans from American banks. German officials used these loans to meet reparation payments to the Allies and to finance German industrial expansion. When the U.S. stock market fell, American bankers saw the value of their investments suddenly drop. To make up for their losses, they demanded that the Germans and their other foreign clients repay their loans.

As the German economy sputtered, Germany faced a growing budget deficit. During the 1920s, the SPD had pushed a series of reforms through the Reichstag that were intended to improve conditions for workers. While the economy expanded, the government was able to keep up with the costs of providing benefits to unemployed workers and other social programs. With the economic downturn, German leaders were caught in a dilemma. To balance the budget, they would either have to cut benefits or raise taxes on employers. As defenders of the working class, the SPD and KPD fought against cuts in social programs, while the conservative parties opposed higher taxes. The government was deadlocked, and Germany's budget deficit ballooned. American bankers responded by classifying Germany as a bad risk and blocked new loans to the government.

By March 1930, the German political system was in tatters, when the "Grand Coalition" government that had been formed in June 1928 by the Center, the SPD, and several moderate conservative parties collapsed. For the next three years, no government would be able to count on the support of a majority of the Reichstag's members.

Throughout the period of crisis, German chancellors were forced to call upon President Hindenburg to take emergency measures, as permitted under Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. A form of presidential dictatorship replaced the Weimar system's parliamentary democracy.

The economic depression shook the foundations of the Weimar system. At the polls, the parties of the extreme left and right showed dramatic gains as economic conditions worsened. In the Reichstag elections of September 1930, the KPD polled 1.3 million more votes than it had two years earlier, while the NSDAP total jumped from 800,000 to more than 6.4 million — making the Nazis the second largest party in the Reichstag.

On the streets, organized violence by paramilitary groups, such as the *Sturm Abteilung* (Storm Troopers), or S.A., of the NSDAP and their communist counterparts, become a regular feature of German politics. Extremists of both the right and the left attempted to intimidate their opponents and dominate neighborhoods. While the authorities tried to ban paramilitary groups and limit demonstrations, their measures were ineffective in stemming the tide of violence, particularly in the cities.

Internationally, the collapse of global trade and the German government's budget crisis crippled Germany's finances. Without earnings from foreign trade, Germany was unable to pay reparations to the Allies. In response to the crisis, President Herbert Hoover called for a temporary halt to German reparations payments. In addition, Hoover allowed the British and the French to reschedule their debts to American banks.

Part III: Culture, Values, and Politics

Values are commonly defined as deeply held beliefs, ideals, customs, and relationships that are central to our well-being and our sense of who we are and what they want to become. Many societies are held together by a core set of shared values. Among Americans, for example, some of the most prominent values are the principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, beliefs in equal opportunity and the importance of individual expression, physical symbols such as the American flag, and even our emphasis on consumerism. In the political arena, fundamental disagreements about values produce bitter divisions and often lead to serious conflict, even violence. In the United States, the issue of slavery in the 19th century and the abortion issue today are two examples of this.

Popular culture — music, art, film, poetry, and television programs — reflects and shapes the values of a society. In the 20th century, popular culture has gained sweeping influence. The growth of cities, the rise in literacy, and the spread of radio, film, television, and other modern communications technologies have tied people together as never before. In our age of constant change, popular culture plays a critical role in the clash of values.

Consider, for example, how the values associated with family life are portrayed by today's television programs, such as *The Simpsons*, compared to those of the 1950s, such a *Leave It To Beaver*. Unlike the respected television father figures of four decades ago, Homer Simpson is seen as a harmless buffoon whose wisdom is dwarfed by that of his children.

Your parents, who probably grew up during the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s, experienced a clash of conflicting values through popular culture. This period of American history saw the emergence of rock 'n roll, changes in male-female relationships called the "sexual revolution," and the increased use of drugs. The new values of the young were often pitted against the traditional values of the older generation. In addition to the conflicts over "sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll," there were deep struggles over values reflected in the civil rights movement and U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. All of these issues spilled over into the popular culture of the time. For example, *The Ballad of the Green Beret* gave listeners a completely different view of the Vietnam War than Pete Seeger's song, *Waist Deep in the Big Muddy*.

Like the United States during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, Weimar Germany was a society marked by rapid change and sharp divisions over values. The clash of values touched every aspect of German culture, even architecture and classical music. As you will see from the examples that follow, the visual arts, popular music, drama, and literature were among the areas of culture most greatly affected.

(The artwork on the following pages was reproduced from: *Broadsheets: Political Posters in Germany, 1900-1970; The Culture of the Weimar Republic; Vote Left! The Political Poster in Germany, 1918-1933;* and *The Weimar Years: A Culture Cut Short.*)

The Worker and Society

Artists and propagandists from both the left (KPD) and the right (NSDAP) of the political spectrum viewed German workers as the victims of exploitation by factory owners and corrupt politicians. Compare the sketch by George Grosz (left) with the NSDAP political cartoon (right) from 1924. (Note the Jewish symbol, the Star of David, dangling from the watch chain of the factory owner in the NSDAP cartoon.)

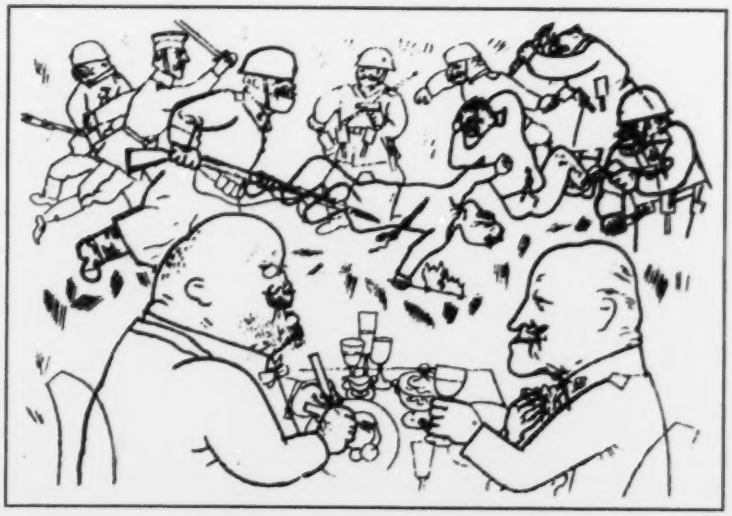
The String Puller

Also strikingly similar are the themes in Kaethe Kollwitz's *Demonstration* (left) and a sketch (right) from *Der Angriff (The Attack)*, the NSDAP newspaper.

Berlin First!

The Military and Society

Since Germany's unification, the military had occupied a privileged position in German society. Germany's defeat in World War I, however, led many Germans to reassess the role of the military in their society. Compare George Grosz's drawing (top) of soldiers putting down a workers' uprising early in the 1920s with a NSDAP campaign poster (bottom) of 1932 that features the paramilitary forces of the S.A.



National Socialism: The Organized Will of the Nation

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Political Ideology

Many of Weimar Germany's political parties adopted songs as their unofficial anthems. The *Horst Wessel Song*, composed by a young member of the NSDAP's S.A. who was killed in a brawl, became the Nazi anthem. At the same time, *The International*, based on a poem written in the 19th century by a French worker, served as the anthem of the KDP. The painting below by Otto Griebel depicts German workers singing *The International*.

Horst Wessel Song

Hold high the Banner! Close the hard ranks serried!
S.A. marches on with sturdy stride.
Comrades, by Red Front and Reaction killed, are buried
But march with us in image at our side.

Gangway! Gangway now for the Brown Battalions!
For the Storm Trooper clear roads o'er the land!
The Swastika gives hope to our entranced millions,
The day for freedom and for bread's at hand.

The trumpet blows its shrill and final blast!
Prepared for war and battle here we stand.
Soon Hitler's banners will wave unchecked at last,
The end of German slav'ry in our land!

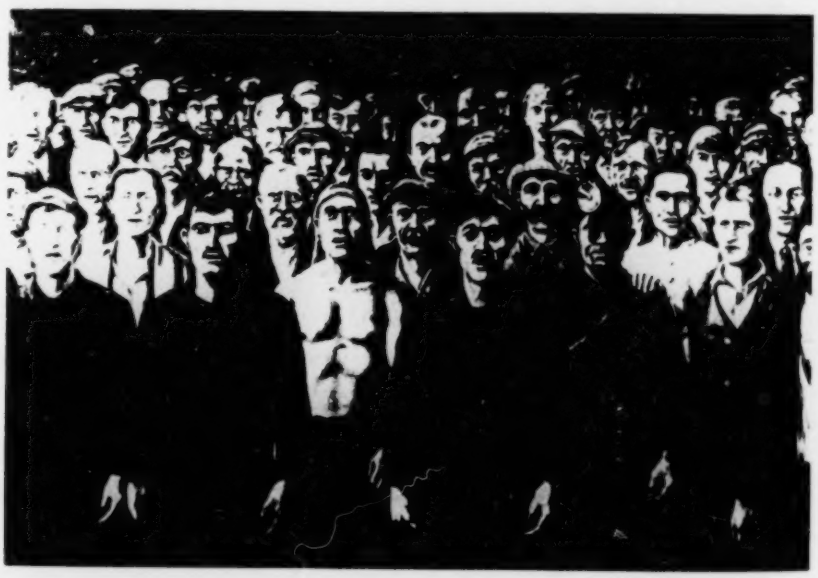
The International

Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!
Arise, ye wretched of the earth.
For justice thunders condemnation,
A better world's birth

Tis the final conflict, let each stand in his place;
The International Party shall be the human race.

No more traditions' chains shall bind us;
Arise, ye slaves! No more in thrall.
The earth shall rise on new foundations,
We have been nought, we shall be all.

Tis the final conflict, let each stand in his place;
The International Party shall be the human race.



Women in German Society

The social turmoil and economic uncertainty of Weimar Germany recast the place of women in German society. For many artists, the moral bankruptcy and corruption of the early Weimar period was represented by the figure of the prostitute. Prostitutes were commonly featured in the visual arts and drama. Compare the sketches of George Grosz's *Friedrichstrasse* (left) and Otto Dix's *Prostitutes* (right) with the song about "Pirate Jenny," a prostitute, from *The Threepenny Opera,* written by Bertholt Brecht with music by Kurt Weill.

Pirate Jenny, by Bertholt Brecht

You gentlemen can watch while I'm scrubbin' the floors,
and I'm scrubbin' the floors while you're gawkin'
and maybe once you tip me and it makes you feel swell,
on a ratty waterfront in a ratty old hotel,
and you never guess to whom you're talkin,'
and you never guess to whom you're talkin.'

Suddenly one night, there's a scream in the night,
and you yell, "What the hell could that a been?"
And you see me kind a grinnin' while I'm scrubbin.'
And you say "What the hell's she got to grin?"
And a ship, a black freighter, with a skull on its masthead will be comin' in.

You gentlemen can say, "Hey girl finish the floors,
get upstairs,
make the beds, earn your keep here!"
You toss me your tips and look out at the ships;
but I'm countin' your heads while I makeup the beds,
'cause there's nobody gonna sleep here.

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Tonight none of you will sleep here.
Tonight none of you will sleep here.

Then that night there's a bang in the night,
and you yell, "Who's that kickin' up a row?"
And you see me kind a starin' out the windows.
And you say "What's she got to stare at now?"
And the ship, the black freighter, turns around
in the harbor, shootin' guns from the bow!

Then you gentlemen can wipe off the laugh
from your face,
ev'ry building in town is a flat one.
Your whole stinkin' place will be down to the ground,
only this cheap hotel standin' up safe and sound,
and you yell, "Why the hell spare that one?"
And you yell, "Why the hell spare that one?"

All the night through with the noise and to do,
you wonder who's that person lives up there.

Then you see me steppin' out into the morning,
lookin' nice with a ribbon in my hair.
And the ship, the black freighter, runs the flag up
its masthead and a cheer rings the air.

By noontime the dock is all swarmin' with men,
comin' off of that ghostly freighter.
They're movin' in the shadows where no one can see,
and they're chainin' up people and bringin'
them to me,
askin' me, "Kill them now or later?"
Askin' me, "Kill them now or later?"

Nine by the clock and so still on the dock,
you can hear a foghorn miles away.
In that quiet of death, I'll say, "Right now!"
And they pile up the bodies and I'll say,
"That'll learn you!"
Then a ship, the black freighter, disappears out to sea,
and on it is me.

The Abortion Controversy

Women's issues, particularly abortion rights, typically reflected fundamental differences in values. The SPD and the KPD actively campaigned to repeal paragraph 218 of the German criminal code, which prohibited abortions, while the predominantly Catholic Center party and the NSDAP strongly opposed repeal. *The Ballad of Paragraph 218*, by Bertholt Brecht, presents a conversation between a married woman ("Frau Griebel") and her doctor. The poster below, *Down with the Abortion Paragraph*, by Kaethe Kollwitz, was used by the KPD in its election campaign.

The Ballad of Paragraph 218, by Bertholt Brecht

"Please, doctor. I've missed my monthly..."
Why, this is simply great!
If I may put it bluntly
You're raising our birthrate.
"Please, doctor, now we're homeless..."
But you'll have a bed somewhere
So best put your feet up, moan less
And force yourself to grin and bear.
You'll make a simply splendid little mummy
Producing cannon-fodder from your tummy
That's what your body's for, and you know it,
what's more
And it's laid down by law
And now get this straight:
You'll soon be a mother, just wait.

"But, doctor, no job or dwelling:
My man would find kids the last straw..."
No, rather a new compelling
Objective to work for.
"But, doctor..." Really, Frau Griebel
I ask myself what this means
You see, our state needs people
To operate our machines.
You'll make a simply splendid little mummy
Producing factory fodder from your tummy
That's what your body's for,
and you know it, what's more
And it's laid down by law
And now get this straight:
You'll soon be a mother, just wait.

"But, doctor, there's such unemployment..."
I can't follow what you say.
You're all out for enjoyment
Then grumble at having to pay.
If we make a prohibition
You bet we've a purpose in mind.
Better recognize your condition
And once you've agreed to put yourselves in our hands, you'll find
You're a simply splendid little mummy
Producing cannon fodder from your tummy
That's what your body's for,
and you know it, what's more
And it's laid down by law
And now get this straight:
You'll soon be a mother,
just wait.

Down with the Abortion Paragraph!

The Unemployed and Political Violence

Street battles between members of the NSDAP and the KDP intensified as the economic depression deepened in the early 1930s. In *Song of the S.A. Man,* Bertholt Brecht, a KDP member, reveals sympathy for the young unemployed men who were attracted to Hitler's movement. Compare *Song of the S.A. Man* with the *Horst Wessel Song.*

Song of the S.A. Man, by Bertholt Brecht

My hunger made me fall asleep
With a belly ache
Then I heard voices crying
Hey, Germany awake!

Then I saw crowds of men marching:
To the Third Reich, I heard them say.
I thought as I'd nothing to live for
I might as well march their way.

And as I marched, there marched beside me
The fattest of that crew
And when I shouted "We want bread and work"
The fat man shouted too.

The chief of staff wore boots
My feet meanwhile were wet
But both of us were marching
Wholeheartedly in step.

I thought that the left road led forward
He told me that I was wrong.
I went the way that he ordered
And blindly tagged along.
And those who were weak from hunger
Kept marching, pale and taut
Together with the well-fed
To some Third Reich of a sort.

They told me which enemy to shoot at
So I took their gun and aimed
And, when I had shot, saw my brother
Was the enemy they had named.

Now I know: over there stands my brother
It's hunger that makes us one
While I march with the enemy
My brother's and my own.

So now my brother is dying
By my own hand he fell
Yet I know that if he's defeated
I shall be lost as well.

Optional Reading:
Children's Literature in Weimar Germany

Nancy Drew and *The Hardy Boys*, Judy Blume and Roald Dahl. At first glance, such well-known titles and authors of children's literature appear to have no connection to political ideology. Yet children's literature has traditionally been a means of instilling values in young people. Children's literature has gained parental approval not only because it helps young people improve their reading skills, but also because it offers positive role models and teaches important lessons.

As in other areas of popular culture, children's literature reflects and shapes the values of the larger society. For example, the wise and understanding teachers and parents found in *The Hardy Boys* series bear little resemblance to the cruel father and school principal of *Matilda*, a novel by Roald Dahl. When a society is split over fundamental values, these divisions are often reflected in children's literature. Such was the case in Weimar Germany.

In the following pages, you will have an opportunity to review three very popular and influential examples of children's literature from Weimar Germany. The books are *Emil and the Detective* (1929) by Erich Kaestner, *The Hitler Youth Quex* (1931) by Karl Schenzinger, and *Ede and Unku* (1931) by Alex Wedding (Grete Weiskopf). Each was written to shape the political and social values of young readers. As you read the plot summaries and excerpts, identify passages that reveal the political point of view of the authors. Ask yourself how the authors try to shape the political perceptions and behavior of their young readers.

EMIL AND THE DETECTIVE

Emil is sent by his hard-working mother to visit relatives in Berlin. His mother gives him 140 marks, which she pins on the inside of his coat. During his trip, Emil is joined in his compartment by Mr. Grundeis. After waking up from a nap, Emil discovers that Mr. Grundeis has gone and his money is missing. Although Emil finds Mr. Grundeis in Berlin, he does not go to the police. Instead, he is befriended by a group of middle-class boys who offer to help Emil trail Mr. Grundeis and recover the money. The leader of the boys, whose father is an official in the Ministry of Justice, is known as "the Professor." He assigns each member of the group a specific responsibility. One boy, Dienstag (Tuesday), volunteers for the job of manning the telephone for two days and passing on messages to the others, even though this means that he will miss out on the excitement.

The professor's role as a positive authority figure and his attention to proper legal procedures are evident from the following dialogue:

"You're fighting the moths!" said Traugott enraged. "We'll just watch for the opportunity and steal the money he stole back from him!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Professor. "If we steal the money from him then we are exactly the same kind of thieves that he is himself."

"I just won't be made a fool of!" yelled Traugott. "If someone steals something from me and I steal it back from him, then I am not a thief!"

"On the contrary. Then you are a thief," asserted the Professor.

"Don't talk nonsense," murmured Traugott.

"The Professor is certainly right," interrupted Emil. "If I take something away from someone secretly, I am a thief. It doesn't matter whether it belongs to him or he stole it first from me."

"That's just how it is," said the Professor. "Do me a favor and don't have any clever talk here that does no good. The store is equipped. We don't know yet how we're going to buy back those rascals. We'll manage it somehow. Anyway, one thing is sure, that he has to give it back voluntarily. Stealing would be idiotic."

"I don't understand," said little Dienstag. "What belongs to me I can't steal? What belongs to me, belongs to me, even if it is in another's pocket."

"Those are differences that are hard to comprehend," lectured the Professor. "In my opinion you are morally right. But the law will condemn you anyway. Many adults don't even understand that. But it is so."

In the following exchange, one of the boys, Petzold, challenges the Professor's faith in the legal system and authority over the group:

"Don't ask again," yelled the Professor, furiously.

"Don't shout so, if you please," said Petzold. "You have some nerve to order me to do this."

"I suggest that Petzold be immediately investigated and that he be forbidden to take part in the hunt from now on," yelled the Professor, stamping his foot.

"I'm sorry that you are quarrelling because of me," said Emil. "We want to vote like in the Reichstag. I propose that we only strongly warn Petzold. Because we can't have it that everyone just does what he wants."

"Don't be so mousy, you pigs! I'm going anyway, just so you know!"

Then Petzold said something terribly improper and left...

"Not a word more about Petzold," ordered the Professor and spoke very calmly again. He gathered himself strongly together. "Done."

During their adventures, the boys are assisted by several responsible and sympathetic adults, including a hotel bellhop, a bank teller, and even the police commissioner. In the end, the boys stop Mr. Grundeis just as he is trying to exchange the stolen bills, which Emil can identify by the pin holes. The police arrest Mr. Grundeis and realize that he is a bank robber. Emil receives a reward of 1,000 marks and public acclaim as a hero.

In a conversation with her grandson at the end of the novel, Emil's grandmother reinforces the moral of the story by praising little Dienstag for his faithfulness in manning the telephone:

"He spent two days sitting by the telephone. He knew what his duty was. And he did it, although it was not pleasant. That was heroic behavior, do you understand? That was heroic! Take him as an example for you."

The Hitler Youth Quex

Heini is the 15-year-old son of an alcoholic, unemployed communist father. Heini's mother suffers terrible abuse at the hands of her husband, who yells that he is "a class-conscious proletariat" while he beats her. Heini is forced by Stoppel, the leader of a local communist youth gang, to join his group. Heini, who works as a trade apprentice, is disgusted by the gang's loose morals and the constant brawling over the group's leadership. In addition, the communists ridicule and rob him. Despite the efforts of his father and Stoppel, Heini makes friends with members of the local Hitler youth group. He finds them virtuous and patriotic. Heini admires their concept of German strength and honor, and is attracted to their military discipline. When shown a photograph of a mass of brown-shirted S.A. members, Heini calls them "Germany's future." Heini willingly links his individual identity to the group, as is clear from the following passage:

"He [Heini] really liked the S.A. They looked orderly, clean, robust, and their leather shone. They reminded him of order, good breeding, and discipline — just like it was in the old stories....Those lads, too, had worn leather gaiters. They marched passed him one day; each one like the other, shining, lively and fresh, a flag up in front. For an hour he marched alongside them, with only one wish in his heart — to be allowed to march along in these rows, with these chaps, who were young like him, who sang songs. He was almost brought to tears with pride and happiness. These are Nazis!"

Later in the story, the Nazi youth leader, Fritz, explains to Heini the importance of preserving the purity of the German people by not mixing German blood with "non-Aryan" blood:

"I want to train, inside and out, so that I understand courage. I want to smell my blood and the blood of others who have the same blood as me. The word "Volk" [people] has become ridiculous here in Germany. Man, just think! We should be ashamed whenever we see a herd of deer or an elephant horde. They don't mix with one another. There, too, each animal has his place according to what he is and what he does for the herd. Isn't it so? The zoo is the best university that I know of."

After Heini warns Fritz about the communist gang's plan to ambush the Nazis, the communists vow revenge. Meanwhile, Heini suffers a family tragedy. In a desperate attempt to escape her misery, Heini's mother turns on their gas stove while Heini is sleeping. While Heini saves his own life at the last minute, his mother dies. Heini's family ties are finally broken.

Heini now devotes himself entirely to the Hitler youth, who comforted him after his mother's death. Striving to be a loyal and useful member of the group, Heini is nicknamed "Quex," short for *Quecksilber* (quicksilver), because of his speed in carrying out orders. Despite the threats of revenge from the communist gang, Heini remains in his neighborhood to lead the Hitler youth. One evening, after a program of music and entertainment produced for local teenagers by the Hitler youth, Heini is attacked and fatally wounded by the communists. His comrades from the Hitler youth commemorate his martyrdom with a huge funeral procession, carrying hundreds of NSPAD banners.

EDE AND UNKU

Ede is the 12-year-old son of a factory worker who loses his job. Ede's friend, Maxe, whose father is a communist union organizer, helps Ede find a part-time job. Later, Ede meets a clever gypsy girl, Unku. Ede's father, like the NSDAP leaders who viewed gypsies as *Untermenschen* (subhuman), despises gypsies. Nevertheless, Ede finds Unku fascinating. He is especially intrigued by how the gypsies share everything they own among themselves.

Below, Ede and Unku compare living conditions:

"What is it like, anyway — living in a van?" asked Ede.

"It's nothing so swell at our place," Unku said. "Just one step and you're already sitting in Grandmother's lap, or treading on Brabby's tail....Have you got running water and a lavatory with a chain, just like in our school?" asked the deeply interested Unku.

"Of course. Why?" said Ede.

"Why, you live like kings! We have to get our water from the pump in the yard and carry it to the wagon. And there's only one toilet in the yard for the whole camp. It's always engaged! And when there's a heavy wind blowing I'm always afraid it'll be carried up in the air."

In addition to his prejudice against gypsies, Ede's father dislikes communists, and orders his son to stay away from Maxe and his family. Nonetheless, Ede accepts an invitation to visit Maxe's home. Below, he reflects on his father's views as he walks to his friend's house:

"Ede did not know Maxe's parents, and he was very curious to see what communists really looked like. Did they always talk in whispers, like thieves? Or people who had broken the law and were afraid of the police? Ede was just a trifle scared, it must be confessed. He remembered that his father had always said that the Reds wanted to divide everything up. Suppose he had to go home without his coat!"

Ede learns to trust Maxe's father. Through a simple parable about ten fishermen stranded on a deserted island, Maxe's father teaches Ede about the nature of exploitation and the need for worker solidarity. According to the parable, the three strongest fishermen control the fishnet on the island and exploit the other seven fishermen. The exploited fishermen gain their rights only when they unite and seize control of the means of production — the fishnet.

Meanwhile, Ede's father remains unemployed. He is forced to plead for help from Mr. Abendstund, a well-to-do, retired postal official. Through Mr. Abendstund, Ede's father accepts a temporary job at a factory. He does not realize that Maxe's father has organized a strike at the factory and that he will be replacing striking workers. Fearing that the strike may turn violent, Ede turns off his father's alarm clock so that his father will miss work.

At the climax of the story, Mr. Abendstund returns to Ede's home to offer his father another job as a replacement worker. Meanwhile, Ede is secretly hiding Maxe's father, who is wanted by the police after a clash at the factory. Ede explains to his father Mr. Abendstund's intent and argues that accepting a job as a replacement worker would be dangerous. Enlightened by his son, Ede's father orders Mr. Abendstund to leave. He then welcomes Maxe's father into his home and hides him from the police. He also declares that he will join the strikers in picketing at the factory gate.

At the conclusion of the story, Ede's parents allow Ede to spend the summer with Unku and her family in the countryside. In the following conversation, Ede and Unku discuss the gypsy way of life, which is meant to illustrate the values of communism.

"But in the country we don't need any money. Oh Ede — I tell you — the apples and cherries and plums taste lovely! And the fish from the brooks and rivers! I catch them myself with a line."

"But that's stealing!" cried Ede.

"Don't you think that I'd rather go to a hotel, like a millionaire, and order my grub from a menu as long as your arm?" she said indignantly. "I wouldn't take anything from you! But, when your belly's complaining of emptiness, and the juicy apples are hanging over your head — ? And the water's alive with fish? Do you think we're fools?"

"Yes, that's so — the fish — they're swimming in the water and should belong to everyone — like on the island....These things should belong to everyone, and everyone who works should get enough to eat. That's true enough," agreed Ede.

The July 1932 Reichstag Elections

As the July 1932 Reichstag elections approached, Germany's economic and political crisis was worsening. Nearly 6 million Germans were registered with the government as unemployed. The actual number of unemployed was probably much higher. In industry and mining alone, 5.4 million jobs had been lost since 1928, the last year of prosperity. Almost 50 percent of union members were unemployed.

Chancellor Heinrich Bruening had not had a working majority in the Reichstag since the spring of 1930. Increasingly, he relied on President Hindenburg, now nearly 85 years old, to govern through emergency decrees, as permitted by Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. In 1932, for example, sixty-six presidential emergency decrees were issued, while the Reichstag itself passed only five laws.

The presidential elections of the spring of 1932 indicated that many Germans were looking for a strong leader to solve Germany's problems. President Hindenburg was re-elected by a clear majority, but only after he had been forced into a run-off election against Adolf Hitler. In the first round of balloting, Hitler captured 30 percent of the vote to finish second behind the aging president. In addition, the KPD candidate won 14 percent of the vote, while a minor candidate polled 7 percent. Rather than run their own candidates, the Center Party and the SPD lent their support to Hindenburg.

Hitler's strong showing in the presidential race was a reflection of the NSDAP's growing political sophistication. By the early 1930s, the Nazis had set up local party organizations in towns and cities throughout Germany. They had also learned to tailor their propaganda to win over specific groups and regions. Moreover, the NSDAP's broad-based strategy gave the party an edge over its political rivals. Unlike the SPD and KPD, which appealed mainly to working-class voters, and the Center, whose support was limited largely to Catholics, the Nazis directed their message to virtually all ethnic Germans, regardless of their religion, occupation, or region.

As the July 1932 parliamentary elections approached, the NSDAP, the SPD, the Center, and the KPD were the likely favorites among the Reichstag's fifteen political parties. (In fact, these four parties would together receive nearly 90 percent of the vote.) Each of these parties had a different perspective on the problems facing Germany. Each had a different set of fundamental values. And each proposed a different program to guide Germany toward the future. On the following two pages is a summary of the philosophy and source of support for each party.

The *Election Turntable*, by Gerd Arntz, depicts the choices available to German voters in the 1932 elections. Which political parties are represented?

From *The Culture of the Weimar Republic*

KPD (Communist Party of Germany)

Founded at the time of the failed Spartacist uprising in 1919, the KPD rejected the legitimacy of the Weimar system and continually attacked its leaders. The KPD's support was found primarily among factory workers and the unemployed in large cities. The KPD had little strength in the countryside. Although both the KPD and the SPD directed their appeal to the working class, the two parties were bitter enemies. Alone among Weimar Germany's major political parties, the KPD called for the violent overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a workers state, as had occurred in Russia in 1917. By the late 1920s, the KPD was closely following the direction of Josef Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union. From 1929 to 1932, the KPD secretly cooperated with the NSDAP to bring down the Weimar Republic. Each extremist party believed that it would emerge victorious from the ashes of the Weimar system's destruction. Like the NSDAP, the KPD had paramilitary forces numbering in the tens of thousands. The KPD forces disrupted the meetings of their political opponents and fought street battles against the S.A., the NSDAP paramilitary organization, for control of neighborhoods. The KPD also shared the NSDAP's attention to the recruitment of young people. KPD clubs were established to involve teenagers in recreational activities.

SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany)

Founded during the latter part of the 19th century, the SPD was Germany's largest party until 1932. Its strength was based in the growing industrial working class. The leaders of the major non-Catholic labor unions largely shaped SPD policies. Except for a brief period from 1928 to 1930, the SPD was not a formal partner in a Weimar governing coalition after 1922. Nonetheless, the SPD was a powerful force in the Reichstag. The SPD led efforts to pass legislation that established the eight-hour workday, laid down rules for settling employer-employee disputes, protected labor unions, and created social programs that benefited the working class. Both the SPD and the KPD drew from the teachings of Karl Marx, but the SPD firmly rejected violent, revolutionary means to change German society. Rather, SPD leaders were committed to working within the system to improve the status of workers and to achieve what they called "economic democracy."

Mother, have you born your children for this purpose? Show that you are against battleships and war!

Center (originally called the Christian People's Party)

Founded during the latter part of the 19th century, the Center, like its close ally, the Catholic Bavarian People's Party (BVP), drew support largely from Germany's Roman Catholics. Center voters came from different regions and different classes, but they were united in their desire to protect their Catholic heritage from government interference. Although Catholics were roughly 37 percent of Germany's population, many of the Weimar Republic's chancellors were drawn from the ranks of the Center leadership, thanks largely to the loyalty of the Center's supporters. As one Center leader said, "one did not join the Center, one was born into it." The political and social outlook of the Center was dominated by traditional family-centered religious values. The Center's strong opposition to Marxism led party leaders to regard the SPD with suspicion. During most of the Weimar period, Center politicians went to great lengths to keep the SPD out of the government.

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Reichstag Election Results — 1920-1930
(percentage of votes cast)

POLITICAL PARTY	June 1920	May 1924	Dec. 1924	May 1928	Sept. 1930
Center	13.60%	13.40%	13.60%	12.10%	11.80%
SPD	21.70%	20.50%	26.00%	29.80%	24.50%
KPD	2.10%	12.60%	9.00%	10.60%	13.10%
NSDAP	—	6.50%	3.00%	2.60%	18.30%

Data from *Modern Germany: Society, Economy and Politics in the 20th Century*

NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party)

Founded in Munich in 1920, the NSDAP attracted little attention at first. Like the KPD, the NSDAP rejected the legitimacy of the Weimar Republic and argued that Weimar leaders had betrayed the German people by accepting the Versailles Treaty. The NSDAP's program was based on extreme nationalism, anti-Semitism, and condemnation of the Versailles Treaty. The party's success was due largely to the charisma of Adolf Hitler, who declared himself *Fuehrer*, or leader, of the movement. Hitler was a gifted, hypnotic orator. His highly charged speeches ignited the sense of anger and humiliation that many Germans felt, especially after the economic depression began. Because he did not become a German citizen until 1932, Hitler did not serve in the Reichstag. Instead, he remained a fiercely critical political outsider as the Weimar system unraveled. The NSDAP lept to national prominence with the parliamentary elections of 1930. The NSDAP's support came primarily from Protestant, white-collar workers, small businessmen, farmers, and craftsmen. While young voters and new voters voted heavily for the NSDAP in the early 1930s, most factory workers were not attracted to this "workers" party.

KPD (Communist Party of Germany)

Working men and women — unite and rise up! We have nothing to loose except the political and economic chains that bind us. We must destroy this so-called "democracy." The Weimar system serves the interests of the ruling capitalist and landowning classes that rob us of the fruits of our hard labor. Until we seize the means of production — the factories and the land — from the ruling classes, we will remain slaves and our children will continue to starve.

Don't let the Social Democrats (SPD) fool you with their claims that they represent your interests. The SPD talks of economic democracy, but is quick to ally itself with the fascists against the progressive forces of revolution. In 1919, during the early days of the Weimar Republic, SPD leaders called in the army to shoot down our brothers and sisters in the Spartacist movement. They are not "social democrats," they are "social fascists." Inevitably, they and their capitalist-imperialist allies, will be swept into the dustbin of history.

End this System.

From *Broadsheets: Political Posters in Germany, 1900-1970.*

The Center Party is nothing but a tool of reactionary organized religion — the bishops and popes who have sought for centuries to keep you ignorant and docile. The Center denies women the right to control their bodies by outlawing abortion. The Center tells you that those in power have been put there by God. But their God is not the god of laboring men and women.

The NSDAP is not a political party. It is a gang of thugs financed by capitalist bosses who seek to remove even the illusion of democracy. The NSDAP must be fought at the ballot box just as we fight the S.A. in the streets. We have no quarrel with the workers and the unemployed who have been misled by slick NSDAP propaganda. They are our brothers.

The economic crisis that we face today is the unavoidable result of the rotten international capitalist-imperialist system. The day of world revolution is fast approaching. In the meantime, we must not allow the German people to again become puppets of the generals and the politicians. Our country needs bread and butter for our children, not armored cruisers. Instead of looking with hostility toward our working class brothers in other countries, we should unite with them to lead the worldwide workers' movement. Our comrades in the Soviet Union will show us the path to the future. Forward workers. Together we will triumph.

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THE KPD PROGRAM

1. Replace the Weimar system with a workers' state governed by KPD-led workers' councils.

2. Stop cuts in wages and benefits for workers.

3. Increase spending on welfare benefits for unemployed workers and social programs, such as low-cost housing, public transportation, and education.

4. Halt military spending.

5. Eliminate tariffs and other trade barriers to lower the cost of food and imported goods for workers.

6. Close church-run schools and eliminate state support for organized religion.

7. Lower taxes on workers while raising taxes on the wealthy.

8. Legalize abortion under all circumstances.

9. Cooperate closely with the Soviet Union in spreading the communist revolution internationally.

From *Broadsheets: Political Posters in Germany, 1900-1970*

For Bread and Freedom!

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SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany)

German men and women — work with us as we seek to build a better, more just society. The labor unions and the SPD are one. Ten years ago, the SPD brought you the eight-hour day and social insurance to support your families when you were sick or unemployed. The SPD forced factory owners to sit down at the negotiating table and settle disputes with workers. The SPD saved our democracy from armed attacks by both the fascists and the communists.

Beware the insane rantings of the KPD. The communists would destroy everything and trigger civil war. We can work within the system to achieve true economic democracy. If you want to see what the KPD will deliver, look eastward to the Soviet Union, where Josef Stalin has stripped workers of every right in the name of creating a workers' state. Look at the Reichstag, where the KPD and the NSDAP are working together to destroy our democracy.

We are Building a New World! Vote Social Democratic.

From *Broadsheets: Political Posters in Germany, 1900-1970.*

The NSDAP is just as irresponsible as the communists. They are being manipulated by reactionary elements in industry to reverse the tide of worker benefits and social legislation. By blaming Germany's problems on Jews, democrats, and other scapegoats, the NSDAP is polluting our society with anger and hatred. Hitler would not bring Germany strength and honor, but violence and war.

To Catholic workers, we call on you to reject the efforts of the Center Party to set you against your non-Catholic working brothers and sisters. The social legislation that we have championed benefits Catholic and Protestant workers alike. We do not threaten your religious beliefs or practices. On the contrary, we drafted the language in the constitution that protects all religious faiths. We believe that everyone should be free to follow his or her conscience.

In foreign policy, we must not repeat the mistakes of the past. Germany does not need a wasteful program of military expansion. We cannot allow our children to go hungry while we build new battleships. We will not permit a war that slaughters millions of working-class Germans to satisfy the ambitions of the ruling class.

By proceeding cautiously, we will be able to overcome the unjust provisions of the Versailles Treaty while maintaining peace in Europe. We have already ensured that German soil is free of foreign troops and that Germany is treated as an equal in the League of Nations. German strength should be built on a healthy and just economy, not on dangerous militarism.

THE SPD PROGRAM

1. Protect workers' rights and improve the standard of living for working people as part of the struggle to achieve economic democracy.

2. Hold down military spending.

3. Negotiate with the Allies to change the unjust provisions of the Versailles Treaty.

4. Ban religious instruction from the public schools, and maintain the separation of church and state.

5. Impose limited tariffs on imported food to protect small farmers.

6. Maintain spending for workers' benefits and other social programs.

7. Legalize abortion under all circumstances.

8. Re-establish the eight-hour workday.

From *Broadsheets: Political Posters in Germany, 1900-1970*

The Worker in the Realm of the Swastika!
Therefore, Vote SPD!

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Center Party

German Catholics — we must continue to work together to protect our faith, our heritage, and our democratic system. As Catholics, you have been born into the Center, and you can continue to rely on us to champion the interests of our church and our country. We are the only party that unites Germans of all classes, all regions, and all occupations. We are truly the center of German political life. Because of our moderate, reasonable policies, we are under attack from extremists on both the left and the right.

Bruening — Freedom and Order — The Last Bulwark
Truth, Freedom and Justice. Vote Center.

From *Broadsheets: Political Posters in Germany, 1900-1970.*

The KPD would destroy our Christian society, our family structure, and our democratic heritage. The KPD would substitute an international, godless communism for German Christian culture. The communists have fallen under the spell of an evil anti-Christ. Rigorous means must be employed by the authorities to curtail their illegal, violent activities.

Despite the promises of SPD leaders, they cannot be trusted and should be kept out of the government. Their Marxism, however softened, and their proposal to legalize abortion, represent a frontal attack on the family-oriented values of our German, Christian culture. While we will continue to work with them in parliament on common objectives, their interests and yours diverge in a basic way. The SPD speaks with the voice of labor union leaders, not all of Germany. Unlike the SPD, we reject the notion that factory workers and factory owners must inevitably be in conflict. We all have common interests as members of the German family. The Center, like the loving father, will continue to mediate disputes between different members of our family.

The NSDAP has drawn its strength from Germany's misfortune. We understand the pain and despair that has driven many Germans into Hitler's arms, but we must warn them where they are heading. The NSDAP's violent threats and irresponsible rhetoric will only complicate our relations with the Allies and lead us toward war. Likewise, Hitler's demand to do away with the Weimar system and turn over authority to a *Fuehrer* with dictatorial powers will only deepen conflict in our society.

In foreign policy, we should continue to struggle against the unjust terms of the Versailles Treaty and gradually rebuild our country's military. At the same time, our stance toward Britain, the United States, and even France should not be confrontational. Germany belongs to the West. The true enemy of our Christian German civilization is Soviet communism.

1. Balance the government budget by cutting spending on social programs and increasing taxes on individuals.

2. Uphold laws prohibiting abortion and provide government support for strengthening traditional family values.

3. Build a fleet of armored cruisers to protect German shipping and construct defensive fortifications in the Rhineland.

4. Reduce taxes on businesses to encourage industrial growth and promote economic recovery.

5. Impose high tariffs on imported grain to protect German farmers from foreign competition and preserve the traditional way of life of the German countryside.

6. Protect the Roman Catholic Church in Germany from government interference and safeguard the church's role in educating German youth.

7. Give the police additional support to control street violence by the communists and other radical groups.

From *Broadsheets: Political Posters in Germany, 1900-1970*

BAYERN, DER BOLSCHEWIK GEHT UM!
HINAUS MIT IHM AM WAHLTAG!
BAYERISCHE VOLKSPARTEI

Bavarians, the Bolshevik is on the Loose!
Get Rid of Him on Election Day!
Bavarian People's Party.

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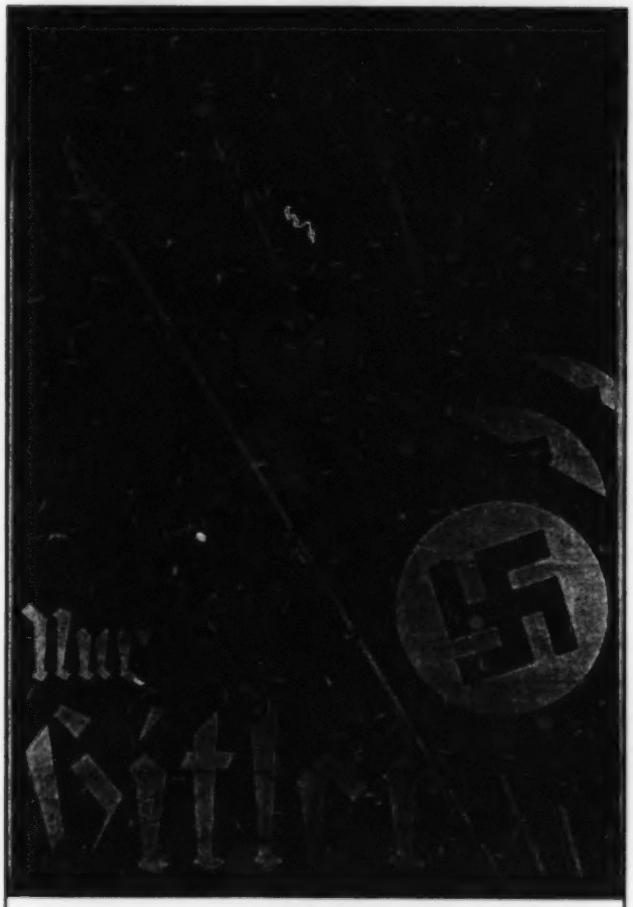
NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party)

Men of German blood — unite and fight with us to destroy the putrid Weimar system. Germany needs a strong, vigorous leader, a *Fuehrer*, not a bunch of squabbling, corrupt politicians, to lead our fatherland out of crisis and on to the greatness that destiny offers. Germany needs a new political system, in which one great national party, the NSDAP, will coordinate all aspects of German government and society. Only by purging German society of the corrupting non-Aryan polluters of our culture can Germany be cleansed and our traditional values protected. Only by ensuring the purity of the German race can we recover the courage, strength, and greatness that is our blood heritage. The good of the German people must stand above the selfish interests of individuals. All Germans must work together for the greatness of the German people.



Only Hitler.

From *Broadsheets: Political Posters in Germany, 1900-1970.*

The criminals from the SPD and the Center, who stabbed our valiant soldiers in the back in November 1918 and accepted the obscene dictated peace of the Versailles Treaty, must be thrown out of office and punished. These traitors have conspired with the international bankers to inflict terrible hardships on the German people. The social programs of the SPD and their allies have only sapped the morale of German workers, and yet one-third of the work force is unemployed. Meanwhile, the SPD has opened Germany to a flood of decadent foreign culture that has corrupted our youth and our women.

With the German nation weak and confused, the KPD has grown bolder in its drive for power. The communists have taken to the streets in their efforts to impose international communism upon the German people. They are not true Germans. Many of them are not even of pure German blood. They are the puppets of the Soviet leaders in Moscow. Only the Storm Troopers (S.A.) of the NSDAP stand between these godless hordes and their ambitions. We will protect German Christianity from communist atheism. Catholics and Protestants alike have nothing to fear from our party.

The security of our fatherland requires that we reject the Versailles settlement and insist upon rebuilding the German army. The German people need room to grow and we must acquire this room to live (*Lebensraum*) by all necessary means. The prosperity of our fatherland demands that we recover those German territories now under Polish occupation. The honor of our fatherland requires that we unite with our German brothers in Austria, and protect the Germans of Czechoslovakia and Poland. Together we will build a Germany that is dependent on no other nation. One People — One Reich — One *Fuehrer!*

THE NSDAP PROGRAM

1. Replace the Weimar system with a regime unified under the leadership of the *Fuehrer* of the NSDAP.

2. Reorganize society to harness the German people to work together for the greater good of their nation.

3. Reject the Versailles Treaty and punish the politicians responsible for stabbing Germany in the back in November 1918.

4. Rebuild the German army, construct a fleet of battleships, and reassert our military presence in the Rhineland.

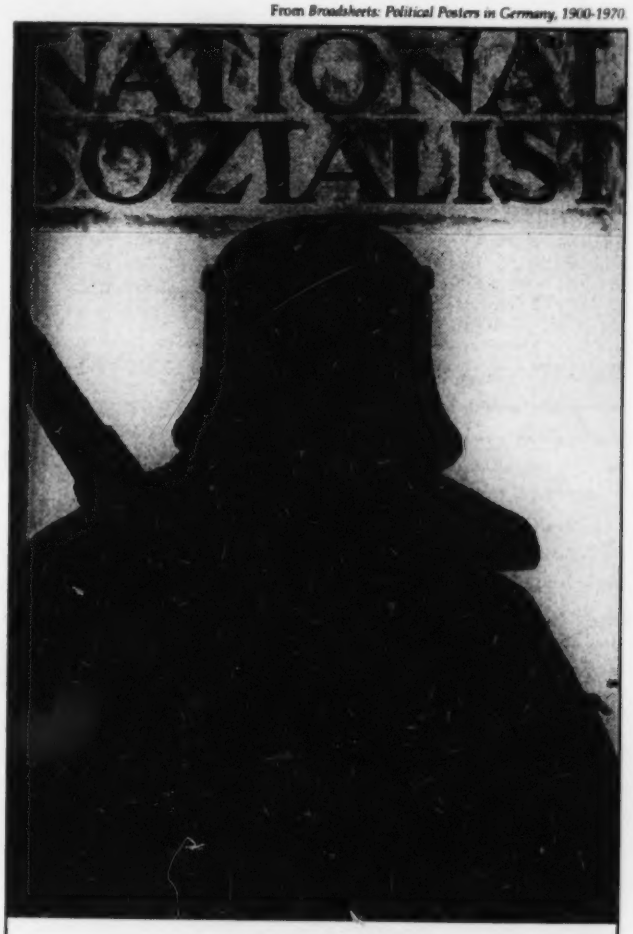
5. Unify all Germans and expand territorially toward the east, beginning with Poland, to provide the German nation with sufficient living space.

6. Purge German society of corrupting non-Aryan influences.

7. Impose high tariffs against foreign imports to promote industrial growth, encourage economic self-sufficiency, and protect German farming.

8. Break the hold of international Jewish capitalism over German banks and other key financial institutions.

From *Broadsheets: Political Posters in Germany, 1900-1970*



National Socialist
Or were the Victims in Vain?

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The NSDAP and Totalitarian Rule

In the July 1932 parliamentary elections, the NSDAP captured 37 percent of the vote — the largest total that any party had received thus far under the Weimar system. As the largest party in the Reichstag, the NSDAP chose Hermann Goering, a war hero and a close associate of Hitler, as the presiding officer of the legislature. Although Germany was still being governed through presidential decrees that excluded the Reichstag, President Hindenburg's advisers recognized that the NSDAP would have to be brought into the government in some capacity.

Hitler initially maintained that he was entitled to nothing less than the chancellorship and complete control over the government. Results from parliamentary elections in November 1932, however, nudged Hitler toward compromise. The NSDAP's share of the vote dropped to 33 percent, raising fears in the Nazi leadership that support for the NSDAP had peaked out.

The November 1932 elections also convinced many of Hindenburg's advisers that Hitler was a passing figure on the political stage. They now favored appointing Hitler as chancellor, arguing that the Nazi leader would be tamed by surrounding him with responsible conservative ministers. Likewise, they expected that Hitler's supporters would be transformed into the foundation of a restructured, conservative government. Many of Hindenburg's advisers belonged to the DNVP and, in fact, had never been deeply committed to the Weimar system. Leaders of the Center, who had become increasingly conservative, and the nationalistic *Stahlhelm* war veterans organization also backed the decision. After intense behind-the-scenes negotiations, Hindenburg named Hitler chancellor on January 30, 1933.

On the night of February 27, 1933, the Reichstag building was destroyed by fire. Hitler claimed that the communists had set the fire as part of a plot to overthrow the government and trigger a civil war. In line with Hitler's accusations, the police charged a Dutch communist with igniting the blaze. Many Germans, however, suspected that the Nazis themselves had started the fire to justify a political crackdown.

The day after the destruction of the Reichstag, Hitler proclaimed a national emergency and suspended most of the political rights guaranteed in the Weimar Constitution, including freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly. The KPD was, in effect, outlawed and the SPD intimidated.

In the Reichstag elections that took place the following week, the NSDAP increased its share of the vote to 44 percent. Despite the curtailment of political activity prior to the election, the SPD received 18 percent of the vote and the KPD polled more than 12 percent. The Center captured 14 percent of the vote. In coalition with other ultra-nationalist parties, the Nazis controlled a majority of votes in the parliament.

With the emergency decrees issued after the Reichstag fire and bolstered by his election success, Hitler wrestled free of the political constraints imposed by the constitution. In late March, Hitler won passage of legislation in the Reichstag that enabled his cabinet to enact new laws without the approval of the parliament or the president. The measure gave Hitler the legal means to dismantle the Weimar system.

In the coming months, Hitler set out to establish a totalitarian dictatorship. The political opponents of the Nazis were smashed and loyal NSDAP members were placed in key government positions. The conservatives who imagined that they could manipulate Hitler were themselves pushed out of the government. Hitler extended Nazi control to all aspects of German society, including the schools, the military, the press, the churches, and even the arts. When the ailing President Hindenburg died on August 2, 1934, Hitler claimed the title of president and declared himself the *Fuehrer* of the German nation. The dictatorship was now complete.

Hitler and his party enjoyed popular support throughout the rest of the 1930s. His economic policies did, in fact, significantly reduce unemployment. In addition, Hitler's foreign policies — the reoccupation of the Rhineland, his rejection of the Versailles Treaty's restrictions on the German military, and the annexation of Austria in 1938 — restored for many Germans their sense of national pride.

Permission granted for duplication

In the following two pages, you will have an opportunity to examine the laws and speeches that provided the legal and ideological underpinnings of the totalitarian Nazi regime.

Orders to Prussian Police, February 17, 1933 (issued by Hermann Goering)

I expect all police authorities to maintain the best relations with these organizations [S.A. and *Stahlhelm*, the ultra-nationalist veterans organization] that comprise the most important constructive forces of the state....The activities of subversive organizations are on the contrary to be combated with the most drastic methods. Communist terrorist acts and attacks are to be countered with all severity, and weapons must be used ruthlessly if necessary....Every official must constantly bear in mind that failure to act is more serious than errors committed in acting.

Enabling Law, March 24, 1933

(This critical legislation passed with a two-thirds majority of the Reichstag. The Center Party voted for granting dictatorial powers to Hitler's government. Since the KPD was now outlawed, only the SPD voted against the measure.)

National laws can be enacted by the National Cabinet [Hitler and his ministers] as well as in accordance with the procedure established in the Constitution....The national laws enacted by the National Cabinet may deviate from the Constitution so far as they do not affect the position of the Reichstag and National Council. The powers of the President remain undisturbed.

Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service, April 7, 1933

Officials of non-Aryan descent [primarily Jews] are to be retired. Those who have honorary status are also to be dismissed....Those officials who have indicated by their previous political activity that they may not exert themselves for the national state without reservation may be dismissed.

Speech by Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, at Mass Book Burning, May 10, 1933

You have done well in the middle of the night to throw into the flames these unspiritual relics of the past. It is a strong, great, and symbolic performance that should document for all the world that here, tonight, the spiritual foundations of the November [Weimar] Republic sink to the ground. But out of these ruins there will arise the phoenix of a new spirit, a spirit that we bear, that we demand, a spirit on which we have stamped its decisive character and its decisive features. So I beg you, my fellow students, to stand up for the Reich and for its new authorities. So I beg you to dedicate yourselves to the work and duty and banners of responsibility.

(Thousands of students in coordinated demonstrations organized by the NSPAD in over thirty university towns burned books by Albert Einstein, H.G. Wells, Jack London, Erich Maria Remarque, Sigmund Freud, Thomas Mann, Upton Sinclair, Karl Marx, and other writers whose works were considered "un-German.")

Decree for the Coordination of All Activities, June 30, 1933

...all of the following are transferred to the jurisdiction of the Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda [Joseph Goebbels]:...general public enlightenment on the domestic scene, the Academy of Politics, setting up and celebrating national holidays and state ceremonies...the press, the radio, the German Library in Leipzig, art, music, including philharmonic orchestras, theater, cinema...

Law Concerning the Formation of New Parties, July 14, 1933

The National Socialist German Workers' Party is the only political party in Germany. Anyone who seeks to maintain the organization of another political party or to organize a new political party is to be punished by confinement in a jail.

Law for the Protection of Hereditary Health, July 14, 1933

Anyone who suffers from an inheritable disease may be sterilized surgically if, in the judgment of medical science, it could be expected that his descendants will suffer from serious inherited mental or physical defects....Sterilization may also be recommended by 1) the official physician, 2) the official in charge of a hospital, sanitarium, or prison....The proceedings of the Health Inheritance Courts are secret.

Law to Promote National Labor, January 20, 1934

A labor trustee will be appointed for every large industrial area. It will be the duty of this officer to promote the maintenance of industrial peace....Each member of a working community is responsible for the conscientious performance of the duties entailed by his position in that community. His conduct must be such as to deserve the consideration attached to his position, and in particular he must be constantly mindful of his duty to devote his energies wholeheartedly to the services of the undertaking and to subordinate himself to the general good.

Law for the Reorganization of the Reich, January 30, 1934

The popular assemblies of the individual states are hereby abolished. The sovereign rights of individual states are hereby transferred to the Reich. The governments of the individual states are to be subordinate to the Reich government....The Reich government may draw up new constitutional laws.

Armed Forces Oath of Personal Loyalty, August 2, 1934

I swear before God this holy oath: that I shall give absolute obedience to the *Fuehrer* of the German Reich and people, Adolf Hitler, the Supreme Commander of the *Wehrmacht* [army], and as a courageous soldier will be ready at all times to lay down my life for this oath.

Law Regarding Labor Service, June 26, 1935

All young Germans of both sexes are obligated to serve their country in the Reich Labor Service. It is the purpose of the Reich Labor Service to educate German youth in the spirit of National Socialism so that they may obtain a true national community sentiment, a free conception of labor, and above all, a due respect for manual work.

Nuremberg Laws on Citizenship and Race, September 15, 1935

A citizen of the Reich may be only one who is of German or kindred blood, and who, through his behavior, shows that he is both desirous and personally fit to serve loyally the German people and the Reich....Only a citizen of the Reich may enjoy full political rights in consonance with the provisions of the laws.

Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, September 15, 1935

Any marriages between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are herewith forbidden....Extramarital relations between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are herewith forbidden....Jews are forbidden to employ as servants in their households female subjects of German or kindred blood who are under the age of forty-five years. Jews are forbidden from displaying the Reich and national flag and from showing the national colors.

Supplementary Decree on Citizenship, November 14, 1935

A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He cannot exercise the right to vote; he cannot occupy public office. Jewish officials [government employees] will be retired as of December 31, 1935....A Jew is an individual who is descended from at least three grandparents who were racially full Jews....A Jew is also an individual who is descended from two full Jewish grandparents if...[four specific conditions are met].

Optional Reading: Conscience and the Patriot

Case Study #1 — Martin Niemoeller

Martin Niemoeller, the son of a Protestant minister, became a cadet in the Imperial Germany navy in 1910 at the age of eighteen. His leadership abilities led to rapid promotion and transfer to the new elite U-boat command. During the last year of World War I, Niemoeller was given command of his own submarine and was decorated with the Iron Cross for heroism. Disgusted with the Versailles Treaty and the Weimar government, Niemoeller supported the German officers who sank their ships rather than turning them over to the British as the treaty required. He also resigned from the navy. Like many former officers, Niemoeller joined the right-wing *Freikorps* and commanded a unit formed to suppress left-wing political activity.

Niemoeller also began studying for the ministry. In 1923, he became the pastor of a Protestant church. Niemoeller remained a staunch opponent of the Weimar system and the new "Weimar Culture." He voted for the NSDAP in 1924 and in the 1932 presidential election. When Hitler was appointed chancellor in January 1933, Niemoeller expressed hope "that there will now be a new meeting between our nation and the Christian church." As late as October 1933, Niemoeller praised Hitler for his decision to take Germany out of the League of Nations. Niemoeller's conflict with Hitler over values began in late 1933 as the NSDAP attempted to extend its control over the churches of Germany. The Nazis sought to promote "German Christianity" — a blend of traditional Christianity with NSDAP ideology, in which the folk spirit of the German people and the *Fuehrer*, as the expression of this spirit, played central roles.

The new Nazi doctrine is revealed in a speech made by Hitler's minister for church affairs in early 1937: "[speaking] always of belief in Christ as the Son of God. This [is] laughable. For that [is] a dogma of the past; true Christianity [is] represented by National Socialism; National Socialism [is] the fulfillment of God's will; it [is] not the church which had exhibited the faith which moves mountains. It [is] the *Fuehrer*, and he [is] the herald of a new revelation."

Niemoeller emerged as a principal opponent of Nazi efforts to reshape Christianity and manipulate the church. In September 1933, Niemoeller formed an emergency league of pastors to protest the decision of a Nazi-dominated church conference to dismiss twenty-three ministers who were considered "non-Aryan" or who had married "non-Aryans." By January 1934, more than 7,000 Protestant pastors had joined Niemoeller's opposition group, prompting a response from Hitler himself.

On January 25, 1934, Niemoeller and several of his supporters were summoned to a meeting with the *Fuehrer*. An angry Hitler demanded that they leave the care of the Third Reich to him and focus only on getting people to heaven. Hermann Goering then read to them transcripts of telephone conversations they had held with one another. Clearly, the secret police was now closely monitoring their actions. Although membership in the emergency league of pastors dropped to 5,000 as a result of government intimidation, Niemoeller continued to speak out against Hitler and became a focus of the internal opposition to Nazi rule. Because of his international reputation, Niemoeller drew the attention of church leaders throughout the world to the situation in Germany.

On June 27, 1937, Niemoeller was arrested after violating an order by Hitler that prohibited mention of the names of arrested ministers from the pulpit. (See the second excerpt from Niemoeller's sermons.) Three days later, Niemoeller was arrested for the sixth time by the secret police. At his trial six months later, Niemoeller testified that he was a loyal German, and many witnesses, including high-ranking military commanders and one of Hermann Goering' sisters, testified to his patriotism. Although the trial judge dismissed all of the serious charges and ordered that Niemoeller be released, Hitler ordered that the pastor be held as his "personal prisoner" in Sachsenhausen concentration camp. In September 1939, on the eve of World War II, Lieutenant Commander (retired) Niemoeller wrote the chief of the German navy, Admiral Erich Raeder,

from his cell in Sachsenhausen with an offer to serve his country in any capacity in the upcoming war. His offer was rejected. After seven years in prison, including four years in solitary confinement, Martin Niemoeller was released by Allied troops in May 1945.

Excerpts from Martin Niemoeller's sermons (1933-37):

The church cannot allow its actions towards its members to be prescribed by the state. The baptized Jew is a member of our church....But if the state command us to do wrong, 'We must obey God rather than men.'...We see more and more clearly how there is being propagated a new heathenism, which wishes to have nothing to do with the Saviour, who was crucified for us, while the church which acknowledges that Saviour as its only Lord is exposed to reproval as an enemy of the state....[The Reich minister for church affairs is] trying to compel the church to tolerate racial heresy and poison itself with such doctrines....[While] we are prepared to sacrifice all our worldly goods and our blood for the state and our German people...[we will not] have it said of us before God's judgment seat: 'When the gospel of Jesus was attacked in Germany, you were silent and, without resisting, left your children to an alien spirit'...

In response to attacks on the "Jewish" Old Testament: *The words which once led our nation to the living God are one after the other being filled up with debris a yard high [referring to a previous promise of noninterference in religious affairs given by Hitler]....Does the* Fuehrer's *word still hold good? We must not — for Heaven's sake — make a German gospel out of the gospel; we must not — for Heaven's sake — make a German church out of Christ's church; we must not — for Heaven's sake — make German Christians out of Protestant Christians....Neutrality is impossible in Germany, persecution has begun. I think, for instance, how on Wednesday the secret police penetrated the closed church of Friedrich Werder and arrested at the altar eight [ministers] of the Council of Brethren....And we recall today how the pulpit of St. Anne's church remains empty, because our pastor and brother Mueller, with forty-seven other Christian brothers and sisters of our Protestant church, has been taken into custody.*

Case Study #2 — Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in 1906, the son of one of Germany's most respected psychiatrists. While Bonhoeffer was too young to serve in World War I, two of his older brothers fought. One died at the front. Unlike Martin Niemoeller, Bonhoeffer chose theology as his first career. After completing his doctoral work, he began lecturing at the University of Berlin in 1929 at the age of twenty-three — two years below the minimum age for ordination as a minister. He soon won international recognition for his work on Christian ethics, addressing the issues of what it means to live as a disciple of Christ in the 20th century and how to apply Christ's teachings to situations involving moral values. Bonhoeffer also founded a seminary at which young men wishing to become ministers could study theology and practice living as disciples of Christ in a communal atmosphere.

Despite his youth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer became one of the leaders of the Protestant movement which resisted Hitler's attempts to enlist the churches in the Nazi cause. Together with Martin Niemoeller, Bonhoeffer increasingly found himself a target of Nazi suspicion. In September 1935, the government prohibited unauthorized church groups from training and ordaining clergy, thereby outlawing the seminary that Bonhoeffer had founded. Despite this prohibition, Bonhoeffer continued to instruct young seminarians and to use his contacts abroad to gain the support of foreign church groups.

Through his brother-in-law, Hans von Dohnanyi, a high-ranking attorney in the Department of Justice, Bonhoeffer and his family were given advanced warning of actions to be taken by the Hitler government. In the summer of 1938, Bonhoeffer's twin sister, Sabine, and her Jewish-born husband fled Germany with his assistance before the frontiers were closed to those identified as Jews by the "J" stamped in their passports. As events in the spring of 1939 made war increasingly likely, Bonhoeffer decided to leave Germany to avoid facing the prospect of military service. To fight for the Nazis would have violated Bonhoeffer's conscience, yet to reject military service would have appeared

unpatriotic and would have damaged the church protest movement. In June 1939, Bonhoeffer left for the United States. After only a few weeks abroad, however, Bonhoeffer returned to his homeland. The reasons for his decision are evident in a letter Bonhoeffer wrote to an American friend:

I have come to the conclusion that I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I shall have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people....Such a decision each man must make for himself. Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose, but I cannot make that choice in security.

Through his brother-in-law, Bonhoeffer became actively involved in the German political resistance movement. Among the leaders of this movement were highly placed officers in the *Abwehr* — the German military intelligence department. By 1940, Bonhoeffer had become a part-time agent for the *Abwehr*, even though the *Gestapo*, the government's secret police force, had prohibited him from speaking in public or writing for publication and had required him to report regularly to them because of his subversive activities. Working under the protection of the *Abwehr*, Bonhoeffer was involved in an operation which twelve Jews were smuggled to Switzerland. He was also used to open communication links between Britain and the German political opposition through his contacts with British clergy. The opposition's hopes that army leaders would overthrow Hitler in 1941 were dashed when the generals planning the coup failed to act.

By 1942, the opposition had begun considering more drastic measures. Bonhoeffer himself had come to believe that assassinating Hitler would represent God's proper judgment. He was aware of two plans to kill Hitler in March 1943. In one instance, a bomb planted on Hitler's plane failed to explode. In the other instance, a change in Hitler's itinerary frustrated the would-be assassins. The next month, Bonhoeffer and his brother-in-law were arrested and imprisoned. Despite intense questioning, neither revealed any information about fellow opposition members. Further assassination attempts, including an explosion which seriously injured Hitler on July 20, 1944, continued during their imprisonment. The July 1944 attempt caused the *Gestapo* to focus on the *Abwehr*. Many of the plotters, including Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the *Abwehr*, were arrested. On April 9, 1945, one month before the end of the war, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, his brother-in-law, Hans von Dohnanyi, Admiral Canaris, and several other high-ranking officers were executed.

Chronology of German History — 1914-1939

1914

•June 28	Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, is assassinated in Sarajevo by Serb nationalists.
•August 1	Germany declares war on Russia and on France two days later, beginning World War I.

1917

•April 4	The United States declares war against Germany.
•November	Communists under V.I. Lenin seize power in Russia.

1918

•January 8	President Wilson announces his Fourteen Points.
•March	Germany and Russia sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, requiring Russia to give up huge tracts of territory.
•March	Germany launches its final offensive on the western front.
•July	The Allies begin a counter-offensive, erasing German advances.
•November	German military leaders ask their government to request an armistice; The German fleet mutinies; Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates.
•November 11	Armistice is declared, ending World War I.

1919

•January	The SPD-led government calls in troops to suppress an uprising in Berlin led by the communist Spartacus League.
•June 28	Germany's government signs, under protest, the Versailles Treaty.
•July 31	The Weimar Constitution is adopted.
•November	The U.S. Senate rejects U.S. membership in the League of Nations.

1920

•March	A right-wing coup d'etat collapses in Berlin after forcing the Weimar government to flee.

1922

•June 24	German Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau is assassinated.

1923

•January	French troops occupy the Ruhr, sparking a campaign of passive resistance by Germany.
•June-December	Hyperinflation in Germany forces the government to issue new currency.
•November	Police break up an attempted *putsch* by the NSDAP in Munich.

1925

•April	Retired Field Marshal Hindenburg is elected president.

1929

•October	A stock market crash in the United States triggers a worldwide depression.

1930

•September	The NSDAP wins 18 percent of the vote in Reichstag elections.

1932

•April	Hindenburg defeats Hitler in a run-off election for president.
•July	The NSDAP emerges as the largest party in Reichstag elections.

1933

•January 30	Hitler is appointed chancellor by Hindenburg.
•February 27	The Reichstag is destroyed by fire, prompting Hitler to declare emergency rule.
•March 23	The Enabling Law allows Hitler's government to bypass the Reichstag and the constitution.
•July	Hitler bans political parties other than the NSDAP.
•October	Germany withdraws from the League of Nations.

1934

•June	The NSDAP purges the leadership of the S.A.
•August	Hitler combines the offices of the president and the chancellor and formally assumes the title of *Fuehrer*.

1935

•September	Hitler proclaims anti-Semitic Nuremberg Laws.

1936

•March	German troops move into the Rhineland in violation of the Versailles Treaty.

1938

•March	Germany annexes Austria.
•September	British and French leaders agree to allow Germany to occupy the German-populated Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia.

1939

•March	Germany occupies all of Czechoslovakia.
•August	Germany and the Soviet Union sign a non-aggression pact.
•September 1	Germany invades Poland, setting off World War II in Europe.

Biographical Sketches

Bertholt Brecht (1898-1956)

Born in Bavaria, Bertholt Brecht studied medicine and served in an army hospital during World War I. He developed a strong opposition to capitalism and became a supporter of the KPD. Working in Berlin during most of the Weimar years, he was involved in the movement to revolutionize the arts. He collaborated with composers Kurt Weill and Paul Hindemith in writing and staging musical plays, which he called "operas." The most famous of these operas were *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) and *The Rise and Fall of the Town of Mahoganny* (1930).

In addition to these works, Brecht wrote more than 100 poems, some in the form of ballads. Nearly all of these poems contain a strong political or social statement. After the NSDAP seized power in 1933, Brecht went into exile. His citizenship was revoked by the Hitler government and his works were publicly burned. Brecht found refuge in the United States, where he worked during World War II. In 1947, Brecht left the United States after he was forced to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. He returned to East Germany to live once more in Berlin. He was awarded the Stalin Peace Prize in 1955 and died the following year.

Friedrich Ebert (1871-1925)

Raised in a working-class family, Friedrich Ebert became a SPD activist in the 1890s. Despite having only a limited formal education, he served on the editorial staff of the SPD newspaper in Bremen. In 1913, he was elected to the Reichstag and was chosen SPD party leader. Although he consistently voted to finance the war effort, he strongly supported the peace resolution introduced in February 1917 and was involved in a strike by munitions workers in Berlin in 1918.

Ebert was a leader of the founding Weimar coalition and was elected as the Weimar Republic's first president in 1919. During the political turmoil of November 1918 through January 1919, Ebert opposed efforts to bring about radical economic or social change. He called on the army to put down an uprising in Berlin led by the communist Spartacus League in January 1919. During the crises of 1922-23, he invoked the emergency powers of Article 48, which established a precedent later used by Adolf Hitler to consolidate the NSDAP dictatorship. Ebert died suddenly on February 28, 1925, before his term as president had ended.

Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945)

Born into a Catholic family in western Germany near the French border, Joseph Goebbels contracted polio as a child and was left with a club foot and a pronounced limp. His disability disqualified him from military service in 1914. Goebbels received his doctorate in history and literature from the University of Heidelberg in 1922 and joined the NSDAP the same year.

Founder of the party newspaper, *Der Angriff*, in 1927, Goebbels displayed a gift for propaganda that effectively promoted the NSDAP message of racism and militaristic nationalism. In 1928, he was elected to the Reichstag, and also played a major role in orchestrating NSDAP street demonstrations and brawls against political opponents. Appointed minister of propaganda by Hitler in 1933, Goebbels used his position to dominate German cultural life and mobilize the population behind the *Fuehrer*. He committed suicide in Hitler's Berlin bunker on May 1, 1945.

Hermann Goering (1893-1946)

Born into an upper-class family in Bavaria, Hermann Goering trained as a military cadet, joined the army as an officer in 1914, and was soon transferred to the air force. As the final commander of the famous Richthofen Fighter Squadron, Goering became a nationally recognized war hero. After the war, Goering became involved in the *Freikorps*. In 1922, he accepted Hitler's offer to command the newly formed S.A. — the paramilitary units of the NSDAP. Goering was seriously wounded in the failed Munich *putsch* in 1923 and fled abroad. He did not return to Germany until

amnesty was granted in 1927. Goering was elected to the Reichstag in 1928 and became the leader of the NSDAP delegation. Goering's ties with the German upper class and wealthy industrialists enabled the NSDAP to gain support among Germany's elite.

After the success of the NSDAP in the July 1932 elections, Goering was chosen Reichstag president. As Prussian minister of the interior under Hitler, he was a central actor in the establishment of the Nazis' totalitarian rule. In 1935, Goering was given command of the air force. At the outset of World War II, he was put in charge of organizing the German economy. During the last months of the war, Hitler became suspicious of Goering, as well as many of his other closest associates, and ordered him arrested. Condemned to death by the Nuremberg Military Tribunal after the war, Goering committed suicide before the sentence could be carried out.

George Grosz (1893-1959)

A Berliner by birth, George Grosz was a gifted painter who studied briefly in Paris before the outbreak of war. As a front-line soldier during World War I, he suffered a breakdown and was sent to an asylum. Grosz developed an intense hatred for Germany's ruling class and military leaders. Even before the war had ended, Grosz was drawing pen-and-ink sketches that ridiculed conservative, militaristic values. He quickly established a reputation as one of Germany's harshest social critics.

During the Weimar years, Grosz continued to attack conservative forces through his art. He was also strongly critical of the Ebert government's decision to suppress the Spartacist uprising. Grosz left Germany in 1932 and settled in the United States. He returned to Berlin shortly before his death in 1959.

Paul von Hindenburg (1847-1934)

Born into a noble, landowning family in West Prussia, Paul von Hindenburg chose a military career. He was appointed to the General Staff in 1879 after service in the Austro-Prussian War and the Franco-Prussian War. The most significant military victory of his career was at the Battle of Tannenberg in 1914, where he led outnumbered German forces to victory against the Russian army. He was appointed supreme commander of the entire German army in August 1916. Along with General Erich von Ludendorff, Hindenburg headed a virtual military dictatorship that governed until the end of the war. Hindenburg retired from military service after the kaiser's abdication.

As a leading figure in the conservative, nationalist right, Hindenburg was elected president of the Weimar Republic in 1925, defeating candidates from the Center Party and the KPD. Although a monarchist and anti-socialist, Hindenburg committed his personal prestige to the Weimar system until the onset of the economic depression. Beginning in mid-1930, Germany's economic and political crises led Hindenburg to increasingly invoke the emergency powers of Article 48 in the Weimar Constitution. Hindenburg had a low opinion of the NSDAP and Hitler, whom he referred to as a "Bohemian corporal." Hindenburg was re-elected as president in April 1932, but only after Hitler forced him into a run-off election. Hindenberg reluctantly appointed Hitler as chancellor in January 1933. Thereafter, he assumed a largely ceremonial role until his death in August 1934.

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945)

Born the son of a minor government official in Austria, Adolf Hitler resided in Vienna from 1907 to 1914, earning a meager living as an artist. During this period, he developed an intense hatred for Jews, communists, and liberals. Hitler enlisted in the German army when World War I broke out and was decorated for bravery with the Iron Cross (First Class). Temporarily blinded in a gas attack at the close of the war, he was in a military hospital when he learned of Germany's surrender.

After his release from the hospital, Hitler joined a small, right-wing political group, which took the name National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) in 1920. Hitler quickly established his leadership over the NSDAP and became its most effective public speaker. He received national attention after leading a failed *putsch* in Munich

in 1923. Hitler served less than a year in prison for his role in the *putsch*. During that time, he wrote his main political work, *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*).

Hitler won growing support for his racist nationalism as economic depression shook the Weimar system. He lost his bid to unseat the aging President Hindenburg in 1932, but the campaign served to increase his visibility and popularity. In the parliamentary elections of July 1932, the NSDAP won 37 percent of the vote to become the largest political party in the Reichstag. Hitler was appointed chancellor in January 1933, and quickly transformed Germany into a totalitarian state under Nazi control. For the next twelve years, Hitler ruled as the unchallenged *Fuehrer* of Germany. His program of territorial expansion led Germany into World War II in 1939. As many as 12 million civilians, including 6 million Jews, were killed under Hitler's orders in areas occupied by German troops. When the war turned against Germany in the winter of 1942-43, Hitler became increasingly suspicious and irrational. He committed suicide in his Berlin bunker during the closing days of the war.

Ludwig Kaas (1881-1952)

Born into a lower middle-class Catholic family, Ludwig Kaas studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1906. In 1921, Monsignor Kaas was elected to the Reichstag as a member of the Center Party. He quickly rose to a position of leadership within the party. In late 1928, he publicly condemned the policies of Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann, who had been attempting to convince the French and British that an economically strong Germany would not pose a threat to their security. Kaas advocated a more forceful foreign policy.

Assuming the leadership of the Center in 1928 and continuing in this position until 1933, Kaas moved his party to the right. He espoused traditional, conservative Catholic values and fought the social welfare policies of the SPD. Despite opposition from many of his Center Party colleagues, Kaas supported efforts to bring the NSDAP into the government after the July 1932 parliamentary elections. In 1933, he led the Center delegation in the Reichstag in voting for the Enabling Law, giving Hitler the power to establish a dictatorship. Shortly thereafter, Kaas moved to Rome, where he worked at the Vatican. He played a major role in negotiating an agreement between the Vatican and Nazi Germany in July 1933.

Kaethe Kollwitz (1867-1945)

Born into a middle-class socialist family in East Prussia, Kaethe Kollwitz studied painting and sculpture in Berlin and Munich. She became one of Germany's foremost graphic artists of the 1890-1910 period by reviving the art of etching. Her works, which often focused on the plight of the poor and oppressed, were remarkable for their powerful emotion.

Kollwitz's life radically changed after her youngest son was killed in battle in 1914. Following this, Kollwitz redoubled her efforts to achieve peace and social justice. She welcomed both the communist revolution in Russia in 1917 and the workers' uprisings in Germany in late 1918. The first woman elected to the Prussian Academy of Arts, she headed the Graphic Arts Studio from 1928 until 1933. An outspoken opponent of fascism and the NSDAP, Kollwitz remained in Germany after the Nazi takeover, even though her works were removed from public exhibition. Her personal tragedy was compounded during World War II by the death of her grandson in battle and by the destruction of much of her life's work in an Allied bombing raid. Kollwitz died shortly before the war ended.

Wilhelm Marx (1863-1946)

Born into a devout Catholic family in Cologne, Wilhelm Marx began his public career as a doctor of law and a respected judge. Marx was elected to the Reichstag in 1910 as a member of a small Catholic party allied with the Center Party. In 1922, he became chairman of the Center and continued in that position until 1928, serving as Germany's chancellor on four occasions. During the economic crisis of 1923, Marx governed through emergency decrees issued by President Ebert. While heading the Center delegation in the Reichstag, Marx led efforts to keep the SPD out of the

Permission granted for duplication

government and instead sought coalition partners for the Center among conservative parties.

As the Center's candidate in the 1925 presidential race, Marx narrowly lost to Field Marshal Hindenburg in a run-off election. Marx was associated with much of the key legislation produced during the Weimar Republic, including the social programs adopted in 1926-28. Marx resigned as party leader in 1928.

Walter Rathenau (1867-1922)

Born the son of Germany's wealthiest Jewish industrialist, Walter Rathenau earned a doctorate in physics and worked as an engineer in his family's firm. Taking over the family business in 1915 after his father's death, Rathenau played a major role in organizing Germany's industrial potential for the war effort. While his support for the war was unshakable, he opposed territorial annexations and unrestricted submarine warfare.

A widely read man whose philosophical interests and utopian ideals made it difficult for him to identify with party politics, Rathenau was nevertheless respected for his economic expertise and influence. He was appointed foreign minister in January 1922 and argued that Germany had no choice but to fully comply with the terms of the unpopular Versailles Treaty. Rathenau's position on the treaty and his Jewish background made him a target of hatred by ultra-nationalists. On June 24, 1922, he was assassinated by members of an extreme right-wing terrorist group.

Gustav Stresemann (1878-1929)

Born the youngest child of an innkeeper in Berlin, Gustav Stresemann's intellectual gifts enabled him to rise above his class background and receive a university education and a doctorate in economics. A member of the National Liberal Party, Stresemann was elected to the Reichstag in 1907. Although a vocal monarchist and expansionist during the war, his views changed sharply with the German defeat.

In November 1918, he founded the German Peoples' Party (DVP). Under Stresemann's leadership, the DVP held 14 percent of the Reichstag's seats from 1920 to 1924 and occupied an important role at the center of Weimar politics. Stresemann himself served as chancellor from August to November 1923. Serving as foreign minister from August 1923 until October 1929, he continued Rathenaus' policies and worked effectively to improve relations with France. Stresemann helped to restore Germany's position in Europe. In 1926, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Like many German conservatives, Stresemann favored Germany's territorial expansion in Eastern Europe, particularly at the expense of Poland. After his death in 1929, his party lost strength as most of the DVP's supporters turned to the NSDAP.

Ernst Thaelmann (1886-1944)

Born into a lower middle-class family in Hamburg, Ernst Thaelmann left school at an early age to work. He joined the SPD in 1903. Thaelmann quickly became active in union and SPD affairs. In January 1915, he was drafted into the German army. Wounded twice on the western front, he deserted in November 1918. Thaelmann left the SPD after the Spartacist uprising in January 1919 and was elected to the central committee of the newly formed KPD in December 1920. He visited Moscow in early 1921. Support from the Soviet regime propelled him into the top leadership of the KPD. In turn, Thaelmann carried out Moscow's policies throughout his political career. He served in the leadership of the Comintern, the international communist movement directed by the Soviet Union.

In 1924, Thaelmann was elected to the Reichstag and one year later chosen to be chairman of the KPD. He also led the KPD paramilitary organization, the Red Front Fighters' League, a group that engaged in street battles with the S.A. Nominated as the KPD's candidate for president in 1925, Thaelmann polled nearly 2 million votes in the run-off election. In 1928, in line with the strategy of Josef Stalin, Thaelmann began identifying the SPD and other social democratic groups as the principal enemies of the proletarian revolution. Thaelmann and the KPD secretly cooperated with the NSDAP to bring down the Weimar system. Thaelmann was arrested by the Nazis in March 1933, after the KPD was outlawed, and sent to a concentration camp. He was executed eleven years later.

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